



# AMAA

NEWS



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AMAA Interns at Camp Sheen Shoghig  
in Hankavan, Armenia

P.14



## AMAA NEWS

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# Our Season to Act!

## Are we ready?

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1

By **Zaven Khanjian**, Executive Director/CEO, AMAA

**T**ime is mysterious and puzzling. Wikipedia defines time as "the indefinite continued progress of existence and events that occur apparently in irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future." So 'time' spans from the past to the present to the future.

Nevertheless, a closer look defies the existence of the present as in the pace of this mystical reality every moment in life is either past or future. By the time one thinks of the present it has either passed or is coming.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America is celebrating the Centennial of our foundation. Consequently, there is a 'past' spanning over one hundred years of activity that we are conscious of. A 'past' that has prepared the Association for its relative future. A 'past' where a vision was born and, over a period of time, that 'vision' has materialized taking shape, size and a tangible body.

We are indeed proud of a past that engulfs an investment of a conscious realization of a painful reality, deeply anchored faith, unimaginable toil, immeasurable conviction, magically treasured material, and unlimited human resources coupled with wisdom and intellect. All this making up a priceless legacy for us to invest in human life.

Imagine the amount of time spent, the pouring sweat, the abundance of care and compassion, distances travelled, discussions held and the healthy growth of the Association gifted to us. A legendary 'past' indeed that inspires and burdens us to anchor the foundation of a future that looks bright and exciting.

Whatever the name, our time is the bridge between the past and the future. Our burden is heavy and responsibilities critical for which we toil and labor hard.

The AMAA Centennial is only a moment of reckoning for us, as at every interval of time there is a past and future but the present is constant. At any time, building on the legacy of the past will reap the blessings of the future.

What are we at the AMAA building?

Not empires nor structures. Simply put our focus is the individual. Building, rebuilding and making a difference in the life of the individual. Our collective act is summed up on how we impact the spiritual and physical wellbeing of our people—one life at a time.

'There is a time for everything' says the Bible. So, what is the imperative of our time one would ask? The effort to build a brighter and impactful future, I would suggest. American Computer Scientist, Alan Kay, is quoted, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

We are in midst of our Centennial Campaign inventing our future.

I will spare no effort in walking this journey with you. You will find the AMAA Centennial Campaign program in this issue. I invite you to consider this information and join us in the collective invention of our future. I am ready to answer a call or meet you in person.

"There is a time for everything."

*It is our time to invent our future!*

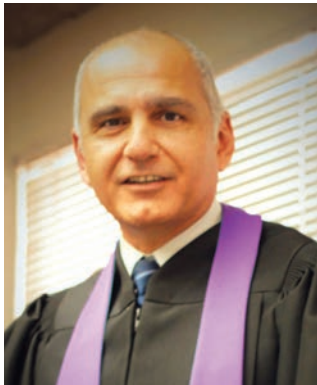
Thank you for your support of the AMAA. May God bless you! ☐





# How to Love God?

By Rev. Dr. Ara Chakerian\*



It has been a year since I was elected as the Moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA). Since then I had the privilege to meet and serve with many organizations, churches and individuals. As a leader in the AEUNA, it is my obligation to not only keep the status quo, but perhaps assist in lifting and encouraging spiritual growth wherever I am led by the Holy Spirit. My observations helped me to share the next few lines, and I pray that it edifies and blesses the Armenian Evangelical community, and all those who read this article.

In Matthew 22:37-38 our Lord was being tested by a question directed to Him by a lawyer, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.'"

In this passage, I believe the Lord Jesus identifies a misconception and a faulty understanding of faith toward God and attempts to solve it. Many have the tendency to relate God with the spiritual element in life, and separate Him from the remaining areas in life. This is the main reason why the relationship with God turns into monotonous traditions or meaningless religion. The Apostle James wrote, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (James 2:19). What is the difference then between the belief humans claim toward God? The answer lays in the command Jesus gave as He quotes from the Old Testament "Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

When God created man, He did one thing different in comparison while creating the animals. Animals were created with two elements: body and mind. Yet, we learn that upon the conclusion of God creating man He breathed upon him, giving man the third element: body, mind, and spirit (Genesis 2:7). The scriptures are clear about the spirit of man being in the heart; thus Paul says "man believes with his heart" (Romans 10:9-10). This helps humans not only to believe in God, but to desire to know his Creator, and to serve his Lord. The commandment is concerning the involvement of the three elements in loving God.

In other words, we cannot separate God as the spiritual part of life. Instead we are to love God with our entire being:

1. "Love God with all your heart/spirit" - this indicates our worship, commitment, and total allegiance (Rom. 5:5; 10:9-10; 1Cor. 2:14, Eph. 3:17).
2. "Love God with all your mind" - this is concerning our reasoning, views, and priorities (Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:22-23, Col. 3:9-10, Phlp. 2:1-11).
3. "Love God with all your might/strength" - this is about the physical body, and all that is involved concerning our works, our conducts, and even our diet (Mt. 6:22-23, 1 Cor. 6:18-20, Rom. 8:12-13).

The Lord Jesus reiterated this command to answer a question which was meant to test Him. Today the world questions and tests our beliefs. The Armenian Evangelical community is not exempt from this. We ought to follow our Lord's example, and have the courage of our forefathers to respond without hesitation, and let the world know where we stand spiritually, mentally, and physically. God is to be loved and honored with all that we are, with all that we have, and with all that we desire to be.

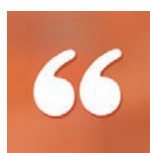
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\* Rev. Dr. Ara Chakerian is the Moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America and the Pastor of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of North Hollywood, CA.



# IGREJA CENTRAL EVANGÉLICA ARMÊNIA DE SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

## 90 YEARS OF AN ACT OF FAITH



Just like memories of everyday events such as birthdays and holidays, all of our memories are part of the process of building a story that has the perpetration of events, whether happy or not. Through the years, we keep in our memory all the facts, which have been passed on for generations.

Much of what we witness is connected to these memories which are recalled by books, pictures, images, or facts narrated by our ancestors." **Rev. Aharon Sapsezian, former Pastor of the São Paulo Church**

After the Genocide in the mid-1920s, the first Armenian refugees began to arrive in São Paulo, Brazil, which with a population now of over 10 million, is the world's third largest city and the largest in South America. As recorded in official Church records, the first Armenian Evangelicals who arrived in São Paulo were Pastor Garabed Assadur Kerikian and his family. In 1925, Pastor and Prof. Peniamin Sarkis Gaidzakian and his family, accompanied by more than 25 Armenian families, arrived on the ship "Guarujá." In 1924, Rev. Michael Bitchmayan and his family who had settled in Rio Grande do Sul, moved to São Paulo and immediately gathered the



Rev. Dr. Roy Abrahamian, Senior Pastor of São Paulo Church.



Children participate in the Sunday Morning Worship Service.

Armenian Evangelicals, who had already started prayer meetings in homes and were trying to organize a church. As recorded in the Church archives in 1927 by Rev. Bitchmayan, the Armenian Evangelical Central Church of São Paulo was constituted and made official. Rev. Bitchmayan was steadfast and a kind person and in this way managed to win many souls to Christ. He was cultured, knew 20 languages and was also a teacher in a Seminary.

Between the years 1926-1930, more Armenian Evangelical families immigrated to Brazil, which added to the number of Church members. In this first phase, Rev. Bitchmayan led the Church until 1930. From 1930-1939, the congregation continued under the direction of Rev. Garabed Kerikian. During this period, the



Church flourished spiritually, musically, educationally, culturally and socially. The Evangelical Church pioneered to form the First Armenian School in São Paulo in 1937 with 50 students. Prof. Peniamin Gaidzakian led the Church from 1940-1954. The first Armenian Evangelical Choir, which at that time had great respect in the Armenian community, was formed by the members of the Church and directed by Prof. Gaidzakian.

Rev. Aharon Sapsezian, a member of the Church, returned from his theological studies abroad and assumed the leadership of the Church in 1955. Until then the worship services were held on the third floor of a commercial building. January 1, 1957 was one of the happiest days in the life of the Church - a dream come true! On that day, a memorable groundbreaking service for the new Church edifice was held. Two veteran pastors, Rev. Michael Bitchmayan and Prof. Peniamin Gaidzakian, and the new young pastor, Rev. Aharon Sapsezian, were on the pulpit to lead the groundbreaking service.

During the ten years of Rev. Sapsezian's pastoral care, the Church lived a golden decade. With his dedication and enthusiasm, he encouraged and led not only the members of the Church but the Armenian community as well, spiritually, culturally and socially. In 1965, Rev. Sapsezian moved to Europe and assumed a leadership on of the pulpit was at the discretion of the Church Council, chaired by George Gaidzakian. In 1969, Rev. Daniel Belmont from the Evangelical Presbytery became the Pastor. With great dedication, he served the Church until 1973.

In March 1973, the Church invited Movses Boghos Janbazian, a native of Anjar, Lebanon and a recent graduate of the Near East School of Theology, to assume leadership of the Church. Even at the very young age of 27, he impressed the Church and the Armenian community with his contagious tone of authentic vitality and Armenian spirit. Within the first six months after his arrival he mastered the Portuguese language. During his pastorate, the Radio Program "Hai Avedaranagan Jam" (the Armenian Evangelical Hour) was started and it continued to be on the air until 1982. Rev. Janbazian, with his dynamism, gave a revitalizing spirit to the youth. In 1975, during his leadership, the "Ponte Pequena" Subway Station was inaugurated just in front of the Church and it soon was granted the privilege of being called "Station Armenia." In August 1980, Rev. Janbazian was invited by the Armenian Missionary Association of America to the newly established position of "Field Director," and with his family moved to the United States. Those seven and a half years of his pastoral care became memorable and a blessing for many.



90th Anniversary Worship Service of São Paulo Church.



At the 90th Anniversary Worship Service. L to R: Rev. Djair de Oliveira Marques (Asst. Pastor), Rev. Aram Mardirossian (Rio De Janeiro), Rev. Dr. Roy Abrahamian (Senior Pastor), Rev. Berdj Djambazian (Minister to AEUNA), Rev. Dr. René Léonian (France), Rev. Ara Mkhitarayan (Argentina), Rev. Dr. Obed Boyajian (Uruguay) and Rev. Simon Pedro Bilezikian (São Paulo).

From 1981-1986, Rev. Daniel Belmont led the Church once again, and was later followed by Rev. Antonio Dominoni. Even though they did not know the Armenian language, they were dedicated servants who worked with love to represent the Armenian Evangelical Church in the community on all occasions. From 1987-1989, Rev. Alberto Darakjian became Pastor of the Church, however, he left the pulpit at the invitation of a local Evangelical Church in Pasadena, California. From 1990-1993, Rev. Dominoni and Rev. Belmont collaborated to lead the Church.

In 1993, Rev. Dimitri Prodromos Constantinidis was invited to be Pastor of the Church. A dynamic person, he re-organized the activities of the Church with great enthusiasm. Rev. Dimitri led the Church for about ten years until 2002. In 2001, the Church invited an Assistant Pastor, Roy Abrahamian, M.D., a young man who was a theological student at the Brazilian Biblical Institute. After completing his theological studies, Dr. Abrahamian was ordained by the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA), with the presence of the late Rev. Karl V. Avakian. In 2003, Rev. Abrahamian became the Senior Pastor of the Church and Rev. Dionisio Straw Ataide served as the Assistant Pastor until 2009. Currently the Assistant Pastor is Rev. Djair de Oliveira Marques.

In the 1970s, the Church initiated worship services and Sunday school classes in Ferraz de Vasconcelos, a poor neighboring town, where a few Armenians had settled. Gradually, the worship attendance increased as non-Armenian believers living in the area joined the Church. To this day, the Evangelical Armenian Church continues to serve local non-Armenians who live in Ferraz de Vasconcelos.

Currently the Church is a member of AEUNA as well as an affiliate of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. The Church has around 60 families with a Sunday school, and an active Ladies Society.

For 90 years, the Church of São Paulo has continually and faithfully served its purpose of spreading the Good News of the Gospel, as well as preserving its Armenian Evangelical identity, Armenian culture, language and traditions, believing that preserving the identity of the present generation will help them pass it on to future generations.

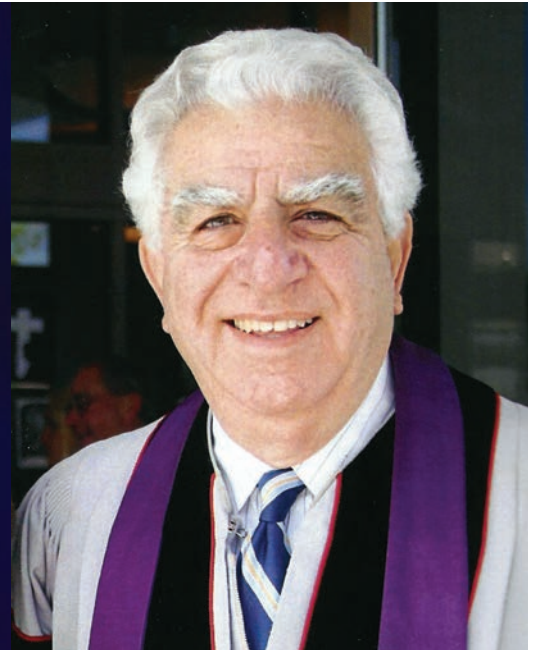
The Church is grateful for the loving support of the AMAA for the continuation of its ministry. □

(Compiled and adapted by Louisa Janbazian from the Church History, originally written in Portuguese for the 90th Anniversary Celebrations of the Church.)



## Meet Our Veteran Pastors

Rev. Dr. Vartkes Manuel Kassouni



Vartkes Manuel Kassouni was born and raised on the island of Cyprus. His parents, Manuel and Martha (Mississian) had immigrated there from Aintab (father) and Marash (mother). Manuel was the brother of Rev. Yeghia Kassouny, the renowned author and minister. He was a teacher in the American Academy, Larnaca, where he taught for sixty years, and where Vartkes received his elementary and secondary education. His spiritual education and experience was in the local Reformed Presbyterian Church where Rev. Hagop Sagherian was Pastor to the Armenians.

Starting in 1949, three educational institutions played a key role in Vartkes's development: Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC, (BA 1953); Biblical Seminary, New York City (M.DIV. 1956); and McCormick Seminary, Chicago, IL, (D.MIN. 1991). Under the guidance of the AMAA he and his wife, Adrine (Keshishian) were ready to go to Aleppo in 1956, as youth workers in the area churches, but the Suez Canal war that year prevented them from doing so. Over the next several years, they had four children: Linda Joy (Walker); Nancy Jean (McGinnis); Karen Martha (May), and Timothy Vartkes (Amy).

After working for two years as the Philadelphia Area Director of International Students Inc., he accepted a call to the pastorate at the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York City, where he was ordained to the Christian Ministry by the New York Association of Congregational Church (now United Church of Christ) in 1957. While in New York he served as Moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, and a member of the AMAA Board of Directors. While there he led a major effort to raise funds and buy a building for the newly formed Armenian Evangelical Church of Toronto, Canada. He ministered in New York for five years and then accepted a call from the First Armenian Presbyterian Church of

Fresno, CA. in 1964. He served there for 13 years, and led their major move to build three new facilities (Christian Education, Sanctuary and Social Hall). He was a founding member of the newly formed union of the Armenian Evangelical churches and youth organizations of the East and the West coasts.

Starting in 1979, Vartkes began a new pastorate at the United Armenian Congregational Church of Los Angeles, following the death of the Rev. Paul Avazian. He served there till 1983, where he played a key role in the startup of the C&E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School, the first such institution in America. From there he entered a new phase in his ministry, that of serving churches of the Presbyterian Church (USA), to which he had shifted his ministerial affiliation several years before. Starting at the Tustin Presbyterian Church in Tustin, CA, he served six churches (Palmdale, Tustin, Huntington Beach, Garden Grove, Yorba Linda, and Fullerton). In 1986, he was called to be the Associate Executive Presbyter of Los Ranchos Presbytery, as their new church developer. In this capacity, he was the initiating founder of new churches in Laguna Niguel, Plano Trabuco (Rancho Santa Margarita), Yorba Linda, North Huntington Beach, and several union and revitalized churches. He also was the Interim Executive Presbytery of San Fernando Presbytery (1999-2001).

His marriage ended in a divorce, and in 1987 he married Samira Audeh. They settled in Orange, CA, where they currently reside. Vartkes retired twice: once in 1996, and again finally in 2015, bringing him to the final phase of his ministry, that of writing.

Among his many articles written in church-related organs, sermon and lecture notes, he has a book recently published, called POINTS OF LIGHT, *A Memoir and More*. He continues in that capacity while also maintaining an active preaching and teaching ministry. □

# 100 YEARS OF SERVICE

## HEADLINERS OF AMAA CENTENNIAL BANQUET IN OCTOBER DRS. RAFFY HOVANESSIAN AND NURHAN & CELESTE HELVACIAN

By Florence Avakian

**T**he Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has been in my blood from an early age," stated Dr. Raffy Hovanesian in a telephone conversation with this writer. The eminent community activist will be the Master of Ceremonies for the AMAA Centennial Banquet. He will be sharing the honors with AMAA leaders and Banquet Co-Chairs Drs. Nurhan and Celeste Telfeyan Helvacian.

The Banquet on the east coast will take place on Saturday evening, October 21, 2017 at the elegant Glenpointe Marriott in Teaneck, NJ. In October 2018, the AMAA will crown its Centennial celebrations with a Banquet in California.

Dr. Hovanesian, who has been intimately associated with the AMAA since childhood, was born in Jerusalem to parents who were orphans, and was baptized in the St. Hresdagabed Armenian Apostolic Church. His mother hailed from Yozgat, and his father's family was from Arapkir where they lost more than 30 family members during the Genocide.

His family was forced to leave his birthplace during the Arab-Israeli war, and went to Aleppo, Syria where he received his secondary and the first two years of his college education in schools run by the Evangelical church. His mother, who was a nurse, took care of the survivors of the Genocide in Aleppo, giving injections, doing home deliveries, and "charging nothing," Dr. Hovanesian pointed out.

"My father was a shoemaker and made a decent living," he related, and revealed that his father in the orphanage did not know his family name, but because Dr. Raffy's paternal grandfather's name was Hovanness, the family name became Hovanesian. However, he found out later that he was really a Hamalian.

### WANTED TO BE A MISSIONARY

"It was in Aleppo that I received my basic Christian education in the Sunday school and Junior Youth Group of the Evangelical church which welcomed us with very open arms," he recalled, relating that his father became a close friend with the father of

Zaven Khanjian (currently AMAA's Executive Director/CEO). "Our families always celebrated Easter and New Year's together. And even before going into the medical field, my ambition was to become a missionary like Albert Schweitzer."

Inspired by his mother to become a doctor, the young Raffy continued his medical studies at the renowned American University of Beirut (AUB) where he specialized in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology, finally concluding his instruction at Johns Hopkins University. Eleven members of his family became doctors.

While he was at AUB, the Armenian Missionary Association of America established the Haigazian College. The founding President was Rev. Dr. John Markarian, now 100 years old. In medical school, he recalled that his "good friends and classmates were Evangelicals" like Dr. Missak Abdulian, Dr. Sarkis Tilkian and Dr. Hrair Gulesserian and added that many of the AMAA sponsored and supported ministers came from Beirut's Near East School of Theology.

Drafted into the U.S. Army as a major, he put his medical education to good use during the Vietnam War, focusing on infectious diseases of the stomach and colon during his assignment at the Fort Knox, KY Army camp. Following one year in group practice in Munster, IN, Dr. Hovanesian went into private practice from 1970 to 2005. During this period, he and his family attended Sts. Joachim and Ann Apostolic Church. His immediate family includes art curator wife Victoria Shoghag (nee Varjabedian), a son, two daughters and seven grandchildren.



*Dr. Raffy Hovanesian*



## ATTACHMENT NEVER SEVERED

"My attachment to the Evangelical church has never been severed," Dr. Hovanessian stated definitively. "As a Christian, I have been educated in its school system. Most of the students in Aleppo and Beirut who attended the Evangelical schools were not Evangelicals, and the schools survived because of the AMAA support.

"I am an Armenian Christian who belongs to any Armenian church," he stated, revealing that his wife's family from Marash included 23 archpriests. "However, I am a good Christian today because of the Evangelical education I received. They are for the service that Christ was speaking about," Dr. Hovanessian declared without hesitation.

Dr. Hovanessian has been President of the Medical Staff at Mercy Hospital, of the Alpha Omega Honor Medical Society, and of the Asian American Medical Society. He has also served as Chairman of the Department of Medicine at both Mercy Hospital, and Methodist Hospital, and Chairman of Methodist Hospital's Credentials Committee.

In the Armenian community, he has been a Board member of the Armenian Assembly, the AGBU, and the American University of Armenia. He has served as a Vice Chair and Delegate to the Armenian National Assembly at Etchmiadzin for the election of the Catholika in 1995 and 1999, Vice Chair of the Diocesan Council, and member of the Knights of Vartan.

In 2014, Dr. Hovanessian was honored as the Diocesan Armenian Church Member of the Year. In 2000, he received the Ellis Island Award, Etchmiadzin's St. Gregory Medal in 1996, and Antelias' Prince of Cilicia Medallion in 1983.

## AMAA MISSION COMES FROM THE BIBLE

For both Drs. Nurhan and Celeste Telfeyan Helvacian, the message that the AMAA lives up to is the word of Christ, "to love and help one another." Dr. Nurhan grew up in the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church in New York, and started attending the Armenian Presbyterian Church in Paramus, NJ in 1992. In 2006, he started serving as a Board member of the AMAA, and since 2007 as the Treasurer of the Association.

Dr. Celeste hails from the well-known and dedicated Telfeyan family. She was baptized by the much-admired and prolific writer of books Rev. Antranig Bedikian. Her great uncle and grandfather were two of the deeply involved founders and dedicated philanthropists of both the Telfeyan Evangelical Fund and of the AMAA. The goal



*Drs. Nurhan and Celeste Telfeyan Helvacian*

of the Telfeyan Evangelical Fund was initially to help young Armenian ministers. Much of the Telfeyan Fund donations, which allocate funds for various Armenian causes, go through the AMAA. She is currently a Board member of this Fund, and since 2010, Nurhan is also the Treasurer.

Dr. Celeste's grandmother was raised in a "very American Protestant church in a very Protestant American town" in Oklahoma. Celeste grew up in Manhasset, Long Island, NY and attended the local Congregational Church.

Her father's family came to America in the late 1800s from Kayseri, and went into the oriental rug importing and rug sale business. Her mother's family emigrated in 1918 from Istanbul. She remembers that her maternal grandfather, whose family hailed from Kharpert, had a large scar on his neck. "During the Genocide, they tried to slit his throat, but he pretended to be dead so he would not be killed."

Dr. Nurhan, who was born in Istanbul, and whose maternal grandmother from Kayseri died of disease in the Genocide, commented that since joining the Evangelical church, spiritually he feels "more gratified and fulfilled in my Christian faith. I see our people express our faith in action, and feel that I am serving the Lord." He said that the basic principles of the Protestants are following the Gospels with an emphasis on Christ's message.

Visiting Armenia twice, in 2008 and in 2014 for the dedication of the new Avedisian School, Dr. Celeste remarked, "everyone in Armenia looked like somebody I knew." Dr. Nurhan praised the AMAA programs and schools, day care centers, camps, and the AMAA medical mission trips to Armenia, which began in 2009.

Drs. Nurhan and Celeste, who have two daughters and one grandson, said in unison, "the AMAA does wonderfully in its goals of promoting faith and doing benevolent works. We are both very proud to be part of this exemplary mission."

Dr. Celeste Telfeyan Helvacian received a Doctor of Osteopathy from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and is an Anesthesiologist at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, NJ. She has previously been Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology at Mount Sinai Medical Center, and at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Director of Obstetric Anesthesiology at Weiler Hospital, and the Mount Sinai Services. Dr. Nurhan "Mike" Helvacian, a Ph.D. in Economics from City University, NY, currently is Adjunct Professor of Economics at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and provides economic consulting and statistical data analysis services. He has directed research and economic programs at IBM, AT&T, NCCI, and the National Bureau of Economic Research and has written extensively in his specialized fields, and published in several professional booklets and journals.

The AMAA Centennial Celebration Banquet, honoring benefactors Edward and Pamela Avedisian and Charles (posthumously) and Doreen Bilezikian, will take place on October 21, 2017 at the Glenpointe Marriott in Teaneck, NJ. For information about the Banquet, please call the AMAA Headquarters in Paramus, NJ at 201-265-2607 or email [info@amaa.org](mailto:info@amaa.org). □

# AMAA Executive Director/CEO Visits Armenia and Artsakh Republics

*In May 2017, AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian visited Armenia and Artsakh and held meetings with state officials, visited AMAA Centers and met with the staff and senior managers of AMAA Armenia Headquarters.*

## IN ARMENIA

On May 20, Mr. and Mrs. Zaven Khanjian met with the Minister of Diaspora Hranush Hakobyan. During their meeting, the issue of cooperation between the Diaspora and Armenia was discussed. They also noted the importance of cooperation between the AMAA and the Ministry and considered ways to expand it. The Minister commended AMAA's role in the advancement of the spiritual and physical needs of the people in Armenia.

On Sunday, May 21, Mr. and Mrs. Khanjian visited Etchmiadzin and joined His Holiness, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, attending the Sunday Mass. After the Mass, His Holiness received his guests at the Holy See of Etchmiadzin. During the meeting, issues of bilateral interest were touched upon.

On May 25, Mr. Khanjian visited Gyumri and was updated on the construction of the AMAA Center. He reviewed the construction work with the contractor, as well as with AMAA Armenia's Construction and Renovation Coordinator, and AMAA Gyumri Office Manager. Mr. Khanjian gave high marks on the quality construction and received assurances of the completion of the construction project on schedule. Mr. Khanjian expressed his gratitude to AMAA Board member Hratch Sarkis for his constant, hands on, supervision of the project in Gyumri.

On the same day, May 25, Mr. Khanjian met in Yerevan with the Pastors of ECA, AMAA Armenia Office Managers and department heads. During the meetings, organizational issues were discussed.



Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School.

Mr. Khanjian was updated on the various ministries. He reviewed AMAA's expectations and shared his thoughts on how to improve quality of services and effectiveness of the use of funds.

On May 26, Mr. Khanjian visited the AMAA House of Hope Center in Yerevan and learned about the Center's ministries and future plans. On the same day, Mr. and Mrs. Khanjian, accompanied by Joseph and Joyce Stein, visited Avedisian School. Their visit coincided with the celebration of the most joyful, most exciting and anticipated "Last Bell" (Verchin Zang) of the School year. On this last day of classes, the students teared up as they reminisced about their 12 years at the Avedisian School. It was very moving to watch the students bid farewell to each other, the Principal and their teachers.

On May 27, Mr. Khanjian attended the 26th Annual Meeting of the 'Hayastan' All-Armenia Fund chaired by the President Serge Sargsyan.

## IN ARTSAKH

On May 22, Mr. Khanjian visited AMAA's Camp Bedrosian in Shushi, Artsakh, where renovations and refurbishments are underway. The Camp is adding green spaces, opening new lanes, landscaping the playground and making renovations inside the buildings in preparation for the upcoming Camp season. After reviewing the renovation process, Mr. Khanjian visited AMAA's Bilezikian Kindergarten where he met with Diana Danielyan, Director of the Kindergarten and the Senior Director of Shogh Day Care Center, housed in the Kindergarten. Mr. Khanjian reviewed the education and learning process at both the Kindergarten and the Day Care Center, praised the work and reiterated AMAA's support



Construction site - Gyumri AMAA Center.



of continued improvements at the Kindergarten and Center to cope with the implemented programs.

Mr. Khanjian next visited AMAA's Stepanakert office as well as the Baghdikian Kindergarten next to the Center. At the Baghdikian Kindergarten, the children are nourished, educated, take naps in comfortable beds and have playtime in the adjacent playground.

On May 23, Mr. Khanjian visited the Honorable Ashot Ghulyan, Speaker of Artsakh's National Assembly. Mr. Ghulyan warmly welcomed the ED/CEO and highly commended the humanitarian mission the AMAA conducts in Artsakh. Mr. Khanjian expressed his delight witnessing the continuous developments in the economic and social life of the people of Artsakh. He confirmed AMAA's commitment to continue its humanitarian projects in improved facilities and expanded services where needed. They also discussed the current situation on Artsakh's eastern border and relations with the Diaspora.



Zaven Khanjian and AMAA delegation meet with President of Artsakh Republic, Bako Sahakyan.



Baghdikian KG in Stepanakert, Artsakh.

On the same day, Mr. Khanjian met with Archbishop Barkev Martirosyan, Prelate of the Diocese of Artsakh. Mr. Khanjian thanked the Archbishop for his spiritual leadership of the people of Artsakh and expressed confidence in the strengthening of the continued cordial and brotherly relations between the Armenian Apostolic and Evangelical churches.

In the evening, Mr. Khanjian, accompanied by AMAA representatives in Armenia and Artsakh, visited the President of Artsakh Republic, HE Bako Sahakyan. The President noted with satisfaction AMAA's historic presence in Artsakh and the different educational, social, youth support and humanitarian aid programs that it implements. Mr. Khanjian reiterated AMAA's commitment of continued and elevated support of the people of Artsakh through its various programs. □

## AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian Awarded Presidential 'Medal of Gratitude' in Armenia

During a May 28th ceremony at the Presidential Palace, held on the occasion of Republic Day in Armenia, RA President Serzh Sargsyan awarded a group of individuals with the highest state awards and honorary titles for their contributions in the spheres of science, education, health, economy, arts and culture, sports, productive work and patriotism.

For his contributions toward the strengthening of Armenia-Diaspora relations and preservation of the Armenian identity, AMAA Executive Director/CEO, Zaven Khanjian received the Medal of Gratitude. The Medal of Gratitude is awarded for state, economic, social, scientific-technical and public activities, as well as for major personal contribution, many years' of devotion and fruitful activities aimed at promoting the spheres of health, education and culture.

"On this momentous occasion, the 99th Anniversary of the first Republic of Armenia, the ultimate contentment of service lies in the well preservation of what has been earned through the sacrifice of our forebearers," said Mr. Khanjian. "I praise God for our Homeland as we continue to advance the spiritual and physical wellbeing of our people everywhere."

Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, AMAA President, extended congratulations on behalf of the Board of Directors: "We were delighted to hear that Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic



of Armenia, has honored Zaven Khanjian, the Executive Director/CEO of the AMAA by awarding him the 'Medal of Appreciation.' Mr. Khanjian has dedicated his life to the service of the Armenian people in the Homeland and the Diaspora and is clearly deserving of this honor. On behalf of the entire AMAA family I congratulate Mr. Khanjian on this wonderful occasion."



## **AMAA Life Member, Activist and Benefactor Elizabeth Agbabian Honored by the President of Armenia With Movses Khorenatsi Medal**

**E**lizabeth Agbabian, past Board member, Benefactor and Life Member of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), and a respected longtime activist in the Armenian Evangelical Community and the Armenian American Community at large, was recently awarded the Movses Khorenatsi Medal by Republic of Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan, on the 99th Anniversary of the First Republic.

The President's award decree reads: "Guided by the 2005 amendments to Article 55, paragraph 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, and based on the Law of the Republic of Armenia on state awards and honorary titles of the Republic, I have decided; On the occasion of the Day of the Republic, to award philanthropist Elizabeth Agbabian (USA) for her contribution to the preservation of the Armenian identity, with the Movses Khorenatsi Medal." May 17, 2017.

The Movses Khorenatsi Medal is the Republic of Armenia's highest cultural award. It is presented by the President to those who have significantly contributed to the advancement of Armenian culture in the spheres of culture, art, literature, education, social sciences and sports.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon to Reverend Hovhannes and Aznive Apkarian, Elizabeth Apkarian Agbabian earned a B.A. degree in Social Work and worked as a trained social worker first in Cleveland, OH and then in Los Angeles, CA, where she has lived since her marriage to Dr. Mihran Agbabian in 1953.

Elizabeth has been active at the United Armenian Congregational Church in Los Angeles and has served on the Boards of the Armenian Missionary Association of America and the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center. She was a founding Co-Chair of the AMAA's Orphan and Child Care Committee, which was formed soon after the devastating December 7, 1988 earthquake in Armenia and has continued to serve on the Committee for over 28 years. She has visited Armenia frequently to view firsthand the living conditions of the children. Elizabeth was also a founding member of the Haigazian University Women's Auxiliary and the Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School's Women's Auxiliary with the late Rev. Dr. Movses Janbazian, then Executive Director of the AMAA, and Zaven Khanjian, then Chairman of the Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School.

Elizabeth is also one of the co-founders of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA-LA), a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and enriching the lives of Armenian women worldwide. Along with her committee members, she was also supportive of many ground-breaking initiatives on the West coast including the opening of Armenia's Consulate General in Los Angeles. With her husband Dr. Mihran Agbabian, founding President of the American University of Armenia, Elizabeth has played a critical role in establishing the University, a most renowned educational institution in Armenia.



Elizabeth and Dr. Mihran Agbabian.

Over the years, Elizabeth has earned many prestigious awards. They include the Humanitarian Award of Ararat Home of Los Angeles in 1994, a proclamation of Pontifical Blessings from His Holiness Karekin II in 2003, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2006, a Medal from the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East for her long standing educational services in 2008, the Gold Medal of the Ministry of the Diaspora of the Armenian Government in 2011, Distinguished Humanitarian Award from the Armenian Assembly of America in 2012 and Tributes from the AMAA Board in 1999, 2003 and 2016.

"Volunteers and humanitarians do not help people for medals and decorations," said Mrs. Agbabian. "Our greatest reward is knowing that our efforts have helped the needy and the neglected children of Armenia. Important things are the small acts that make our world a better place. I am grateful to God for giving me this opportunity to serve my people through the AMAA. It was Armenia who called me to give to orphans and destitute children the gift of love, compassion and Christian service which I have received from my family and friends in my childhood and adult life. Our reward will be to see a new generation of youth coming out of despair to a productive and happy life."

"The AMAA salutes Elizabeth Agbabian for this honor coming from the Homeland," said Zaven Khanjian, Executive Director/CEO of the AMAA. "She has an indelible fountain of energy, love of the nation and a natural urge to help all anchored on her faith in God. On behalf of the larger family of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, we congratulate Elizabeth for the honor bestowed on her by President Sargsyan and thank her and Dr. Agbabian for all they do to support the Mission of the AMAA." □



# 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Medical Mission Team Treats over 1,100 Armenians



On June 15, 2017, 37 members of the AMAA Medical Mission team left for a 10-day Medical Mission Trip to Armenia organized and led by Dr. Al and Sue Phillips. For 9 years in a row, the Phillips' have led a group of mission minded individuals to the rural towns of Vanadzor and Stepanavan located in the Lori Valley, the epicenter of the 1988 earthquake. The mission team this year consisted of 6 doctors, 3 dentists, 2 pharmacists, 2 nurses and a support staff of willing workers. Ten translators from Armenia were also recruited to help the team. They were an integral part of the mission and many return to serve with the team each year.

This year, the team wanted to increase its impact by having a portion of the team return early to Yerevan to see patients in the Aynilian clinic. They attended to many Syrian Armenian refugees and heard of the harrowing escapes and the struggles they had endured.

The medical staff saw approximately 850 patients who were bused in from the local villages and the dentists treated 250 patients. Each patient first passed through the clinic to have his/her vital signs collected and urine testing completed. If necessary, an EKG was performed. From there, patients were interviewed by nurses and medical students in triage to collect a preliminary history. They



Dr. Albert Phillips consulting a patient.

received health education from a nursing educator on diabetes, smoking cessation and nutrition. From the triage area, they were seen by the team of physicians, where they were examined and prayed for. Prescriptions were given for a variety of conditions, primarily hypertension, diabetes and heart disease. The patients were counseled on their medications by the pharmacists and given enough medications for one year.

In between the morning and afternoon clinics, the patients were invited to church services where the Good News of Jesus Christ was shared by team members and the local church pastoral staff.

The Mission Trip is a combination of work and fun. When not working in the clinic, the team tours important sites around Armenia. After working so closely together, the team becomes like a new family. The Phillips' have committed to lead another mission next year, their 10th. The dates are 6/21/18 to 7/1/18. If you have a desire to serve our brothers and sisters in Armenia or want more information, please go to the [amaa.org](http://amaa.org) website and look for the Armenia Medical Mission link under the projects tab. Medical and non-medical, Armenian or non-Armenian speaking volunteers are welcome to apply. ☐







## 2017 AMAA Internship to Armenia: Encounter, Discover and Explore

By Rev. Jeremy Tovmassian\*

Every summer, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) hosts a two-week Internship in Armenia for young men and women interested in the important work the AMAA is doing abroad. The aim of the Internship is three-fold: **to encounter** the impactful AMAA ministries up close and in-person, **to discover** our rich ancient Armenian heritage and **to explore** the exciting ways that God is at work and on the move in our Homeland of Armenia.

My wife and I were blessed to organize and lead this year's AMAA Internship to Armenia, July 17-31, alongside our dear co-leaders, Pastor Joe Garabedian and his wife, Lena Garabedian of the St. Nareg Armenian Church in Montebello, CA.

Thirteen interns participated in the Internship Program this summer: Rita Safrian (Irvine, CA), George Safrian (Irvine, CA), Teresa Grain (Clermont, FL), Alec Garabedian (Pasadena, CA), Jason Garabedian (Pasadena, CA), Melani Salibian (Nanuet, NY), Jennifer Gambino (Old Tappan, NJ), Sevag Khanjian (Las Vegas, NV), Charlie Agajanian (San Marina, CA), Sona Borekjian (Wyckoff, NJ), Arman Gueyikian (Inverness, IL), Mark Buchakjian (Washington Township, NJ) and Sevag Yacoubian (Chicago, IL).

Interns toured significant AMAA ministries such as the Avedisian School and the Shogh Day Center. They met with local church pastors and congregations supported by the AMAA through

the network of the Evangelical Church of Armenia (ECA). They had the opportunity to spend two days working alongside leaders at Camp Shoghig in Hankavan, and they also made stops at key cultural sites to discover their rich, Armenian cultural roots.

Along the way, each of the interns had the opportunity to record their thoughts and reflections on a blog set up by the AMAA. Samples of the Interns' reflections are recorded below, but for a full read, I invite you to visit the blog online at <https://amaainterns.wordpress.com>.

*The churches we visited were beautifully made and had so much history and culture. It was amazing to know that with every candle that was lit, there was a personal prayer that went hand in hand with it. During the week, we also had the opportunity to visit children at the Shogh Center. This was a great experience, because not only did we learn about some of the activities at the facility, we also got to experience it first hand when we met some of the children. The children told us about some of their dreams and it was touching to see that though they endure so many struggles, they continue to be joyous and trust in God amidst hardship.* **Jason Garabedian**

*Coming to Armenia with the AMAA was one of the best life experiences I have ever had. When I first stepped off the plane, I felt like I was home. I met a lot of new people and I loved connecting with the motherland [...]* One of the most amazing moments of this



The Interns at Camp Sheen Shoghig in Hankavan.



The Interns visit Dzidzernagapert, the Genocide Monument.



trip was going to camp in Hankavan for two days! [The campers] were so glad that we came! When it was time for us all to go they were very sad but thankful that we spent time with them. It was an amazing experience. **Sevag Yacoubian**

After stopping at Yeraploor we headed to Tsitsernakaberd to see the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan. Visiting the Memorial was emotional and hard for most of us. Although I was familiar with what happened during the Genocide, it was a life-changing experience to be at the Memorial to honor those who passed. I could feel God's presence as we walked through the museum reading the horrific summary of events. Although the Memorial was a place filled with anger and sadness, it was also a place that filled me with pride and perseverance. In those moments, I felt honored to be an Armenian and determined to keep my heritage and culture alive. **Jen Gambino**

The second day we went and visited [The Avedisian School] a beautiful school that the AMAA built for kids in one of Yerevan's poorest districts. After that we visited some of the children at the Shogh Day Care Center, where they help hundreds of kids who have various disabilities. Hearing about how poor most of the kids who attend the school were really touched me. And yet, when I saw the kids they seemed like they were full of joy and having the time of their lives! Spending time with the kids and playing with them was a life changing experience. It put a lot of my every day complaints and concerns into perspective. **George Safrian & Sevag Khanjian**

Here in Armenia, everyone is so thankful for the little that they all have. They make the most of what they have, and are so generous. I am constantly reminded of a verse in the book of Romans. Romans 8:27 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." It is evident that the people here who we have met love the Lord through it all. They radiate the joy and the love of God in a single conversation. The Armenians we met have so much hope that everything will be okay, and it is so encouraging to see. So far my favorite part of this whole journey has been being with the kids at Camp Hankavan. **Sona Borekjian**

God does amazing things all around the world! It is so easy to get involved and lost in our own lives and forget what happens around the world, but God is at work everywhere. When arriving in Armenia my mindset was on what I could give to the Armenian people, but it didn't occur to me what they could give to me. They showed me how small a blessing really can be and how a simple piece of bread can provide so much joy [...] The children at the Hankavan Camp are so loving and filled with joy for the Lord. Their faith is so strong and they are on fire for God. It was such an amazing experience watching the kids sing their hearts out to the songs and become so involved and anxious to answer questions during their Bible studies. **Melani Salibian**

I am very thankful to God for giving me this opportunity to come and serve Him. This was a very emotional and unforgettable experience. This trip gave me the opportunity to explore the importance of what it means to be Armenian. I am very thankful to the AMAA for this journey. During my trip to Camp Hankavan, God opened my eyes and gave me the gift of being able to eat and connect with the children and leaders of the Camp. On the last night of our stay in Hankavan, we asked the volunteers at the Camp to meet with us and we gave them each a present to encourage them. It was a great blessing for me. We laughed and cried tears of joy. **Rita Safrian**



Interns and campers at Camp Sheen Shoghig in Hankavan.

To say this internship has had an impact on me would be an understatement. As we all pack up our belongings I can't help reflecting on all that we've done. From seeing the monuments of our Motherland's rich history to working with the children at Camp Hankavan, I truly feel more deeply connected with both my faith and the land from which my family has come. So much so that I plan on beginning to learn Armenian upon returning in hopes of one day returning to do more good for the less fortunate. **Mark Buchakjian**

I am so grateful that I participated in the 2017 Summer Internship program to Armenia. It profoundly touched me spiritually. For me, the highlight of our trip was the work we got to do at the AMAA's Camp in Hankavan. Although we spiritually prepared for our work there in both study and prayer, what I witnessed and experienced was life-changing [...] Although we may have been sent to spiritually serve them, they definitely spiritually fed us.

**Teresa Grain**

The success of these AMAA Summer Internships relies heavily on the support and insight from leadership at the AMAA Offices in both New Jersey and Armenia. Notes of thanks go to Zaven Khanjian, Harout Nercessian, Rev. Hovhannes Hovsepyan, Lillit Antonyan, Louisa Janbazian and Marie Viducich for their continued guidance and their willingness to make this program thrive for the benefit of young Armenians all over the Diaspora. We will continue to pray and anticipate God's continued blessing on the work of the AMAA and the ECA. □

\* Rev. Jeremy Tovmassian is the Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Chicago, IL.



# AMAA Benefactors Edward and Pamela Avedisian Visit AMAA Milk Fund Babies in Armenia

By Jeanmarie Papelian, Esq.

In June, longtime AMAA supporters Edward and Pamela Avedisian visited some families who have benefited from the Armenian Children's Milk Fund. Established in 1989 by a group of volunteers in the Boston area, the Milk Fund provides the most vulnerable citizens of Armenia with a healthy start in life.

Pamela Avedisian along with an AMAA social worker visited the home of a ten-month-old boy with a bone disorder. The mother's fiancé disappeared during her pregnancy, and has provided no financial support. The mother and baby live in Yerevan in a small dilapidated house with six family members. The mother cannot work because the baby's disabilities require constant care, including trips to the doctor and therapy. He is a happy baby despite his challenges, and his mother is grateful for the support from the AMAA. She is burdened with medical bills, but she does not have to worry about paying for formula.

The Avedisians also met several Milk Fund families at the Aynilian Clinic, including three generations from a Yezidi family. The child was having gastrointestinal problems and his doctor recommended they try feeding him formula. Because they couldn't afford to purchase formula, the doctor's office referred them to the AMAA which was happy to help, and now the baby is thriving.

The Avedisians also met the twins, Martin and Mark, whose mother died in childbirth. Their father was badly injured serving in



Artsakh and uses a wheelchair. Fortunately, the twins' grandmother and aunt are available to help him raise the boys, and the AMAA stepped in to provide formula free of charge. They are well-loved and thriving, and enjoyed a nice chat with Mr. Avedisian at the Aynilian Clinic.

These are just a few of the approximately 500 infants who are helped by the Milk Fund every year in Armenia and Artsakh thanks to the support of our generous donors. □

Please support and enable the Armenian Children's Milk Fund to continue making a difference in the lives of Armenia's most vulnerable citizens. A gift of **\$20** will feed one child for one month **\$240** will feed one child for one year. To make a donation you may call the AMAA Office at 201.265.2607 or visit the AMAA's website to make a donation online [www.amaa.org](http://www.amaa.org)

**MAKE YOUR GIFT OF LOVE TODAY AND HELP GIVE BABIES  
A HEALTHY START OF LIFE**





# Building Bridges Between Students in Armenia and the Diaspora

By Jeanmarie Papelian, Esq.

On May 31, students from the fifth-grade class at St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown, MA, visited the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center in Yerevan. They were excited to meet their pen pals from teacher Christine Gevorgyan's sixth-grade science class. The students had "met" via Skype and email before the visit, and were prepared with gifts for their new friends.

Both groups of students had been learning about Armenia's environment with Armenia Tree Project, through its award-winning Building Bridges program. After a tour of the Avedisian School and an environmental education lesson, the two groups traveled to ATP's nursery in Karin village, where the new friends planted trees together.

Everyone enjoyed the day. Sarah and Michelle Joubanian from St. Stephen's reported, "We had lots of fun planting with our pen pals!" And Avedisian School Principal Melanya Geghamyan has been fielding requests from her students to ask whether the kids from Watertown can visit their homes in Yerevan next time.

Armenia Tree Project has been greening Armenia since 1994, planting over 5 million trees throughout Armenia and Artsakh. Its Building Bridges program connects Diaspora students with Armenia's rich natural heritage through multimedia education and planting trees with their peers in Armenia. The Avedisian School has been an excellent partner in ATP's environmental education programs, incorporating ATP's curriculum in middle school science classes and teaching students at all levels to recycle paper, make compost, and conserve water.

ATP's environmental education program has also visited AMAA's Bedrosian Camp in Shushi, Sheen Shoghig Camp in Han-



kavan, and Shogh Center in Vanadzor. In the United States, ATP's Building Bridges program operates in over 60 schools. □

## Edward Avedisian Receives Inaugural AUA Presidential Commendation Award

This year's Commencement ceremonies celebrated a number of firsts for the American University of Armenia (AUA), including the inaugural AUA Presidential Commendation Award, bestowed to Edward Avedisian, long-time AMAA Board member and major Benefactor.

The Award was given to the AUA Trustee and major Benefactor of the University "In recognition of extraordinary achievements and distinguished service in the advancement of education in Armenia," as stated on the Commendation.

Addressing the graduates Mr. Avedisian said: "I was fortunate to get through school on a number of scholarships. But that is a very small accomplishment when I think of what I can do for others, and I encourage all of you to do the same."

The AMAA congratulates Mr. Avedisian on this prestigious honor.





# AMAA Executive Director/CEO's Report From Lebanon

The following is a report of Zaven Khanjian's trip to Lebanon this summer to attend meetings for the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East and Haigazian University.

## UAECNE

The annual Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Near East Committee and Haigazian University (HU) Trustee mission to Lebanon took place in late May and early June 2017. The joint Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Near East (UAECNE) and AMAA Near East Committee met on May 31 at the Union Headquarters in Ashrafieh led by Co-Chair Berjouhi Gulesserian. Committee and Board members: Dr. Hrag Marganian, Herair Mouradian, Joseph Stein, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian and Dr. Steven Aharonian were also present. Co-Chair Louis Kurkjian, the architect of modern day relationship with the Near East, was unable to join and was sincerely missed.

The Union leadership represented by most Central Committee members made a well-prepared power point presentation of the situation in and status and conditions of our churches in the region and of the programs and services rendered.

The 2017-2018 AMAA Near East budget was reviewed and deliberated at the meeting and certain recommendations were made. The one-day meeting seemed too short for a meaningful study and understanding and should be extended by an additional day.

## Haigazian University

The HU Finance Committee and Board of Trustees meetings were held on the University Campus, June 1-3, 2017. The financial and academic state of the University was under scrutiny and discussion. Thanks to the efforts of President Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, HU enjoys an esteemed reputation in the country and the community. It continues to be a beacon of enlightenment in the midst of chaos, turmoil and uncertainty blanketing the region and of hope for hundreds of students eager to learn and benefit the societies that engulf their lives.

The AMAA leadership, in concert with the HU Board of Trustees, is working closely with the University President to sustain the academic and financial health of the University facing all sorts of challenges head on. That includes a meaningful increase in the Endowment supporting the University budget, which is part of the AMAA's Centennial Campaign.

## Lebanon Schools

The Achilles' heel of UAECNE's woes remains to be our educational institutions.

A combination of factors extending from poor socio-economic conditions, reduced enrollment, and retroactive government imposed salary increases and allowances and indemnity payments have tremendously weighed on the budgets of our educational institutions.

Considering the geopolitical situation in the country and the region and its impact on society, new strategies should be developed to sustain our educational institutions in one of the last most important Diaspora communities in the Near East.

On June 4, 2017, the only Sunday I spent in Lebanon, I worshiped and shared God's Word at the Nor Marash Armenian Evangelical Church and paid a special visit to the School on Monday, June 5.

## Catholicos of the See of Cilicia

Pursuant to a previous appointment, Mr. & Mrs. Khanjian paid a special visit to Catholicos of the great house of Cilicia, Aram I, at the Catholicosate summer retreat in Bikfaya on Tuesday, June 6. The two-hour visit, which covered a long range of topics from intercommunal relationships, the situation in neighboring Syria, the Artsakh conflict and the challenges in the Homeland, was conducted in a spirit of Christian comradery. □



Haigazian University Board of Trustees.



AMAA Near East Committee and UAECNE Representatives.





## The 71<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the UAECNE *Reformed, to Reform* Held in Beirut



By Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.

**T**he 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Assembly of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAECNE) took place in the KCHAG Conference Center near Beirut, Lebanon, from July 2-5, 2017 in the presence of forty pastors and lay delegates from churches in Lebanon, Syria, Greece, Iran and Australia.

The general theme was "Reformed, to Reform," and the daily morning sermons focused on the various aspects of the reformation of the church, as delivered by the Rev. René Léonian, and followed by lively discussion.

During the opening service, the UAECNE President, Rev. Megrditch Karagoezian delivered the sermon that focused on the relevant message of Luke 1:17: *"And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* Badveli Jirayr Ghazarian, Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical churches in the Kessab region, led the service.

Words of greeting were presented to the attendees by the General Secretary of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, the representative of the German Hilfsbund Mission, an Executive Committee member of the ACOF, and the representative of Global Ministries (UCC & Disciples). Letters of greeting were read on behalf of partner churches and organizations, including the WCRC, ACOF, HEKS, AEUNA, AMAA, and the Armenian Evangelical World Council.

During the three days of meetings, reports from the UAECNE President, the Central Committee, and various churches and orga-

nizations were presented and discussed at length. The blessings of the Lord were enumerated and the painful challenges of many of our communities and churches were discussed with prayer. The problems of resources, human and financial, were reiterated and the support of many partners and the dedication of many servants and faithful members of the churches were celebrated, while the social and educational ministries of the UAECNE received special attention.

Among the decisions made were the renewal of the term of the UAECNE President until July 1, 2021 and the election of new members of the Central Committee. The Emmanuel Church of Tehran was voted as an associate member for a probationary period of three years, with the hope of starting the process of accepting it as a full member. Constitutional and pastoral matters were discussed and decisions were made.

The Assembly listened closely to the panel discussion led by the Campus Minister of Haigazian University, Rev. Wilbert Van Saane, and four students who had recently taken part in a special educational pilgrimage to Germany in celebration of 500 years of the Protestant Reformation.

The daily worship and prayer services of the Assembly were led by Seta Karagoezian, Maral Haidostian, Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian, Sona Keoshgerian, and Rev. Vazrig Safarian. The musical accompaniment was provided by Yester Kilaghbian.

The closing communion service was led by Badveli Simon Der-Sahagian, the sermon was delivered by Rev. Vicken Cholakian and the Holy Communion was administered by Rev. Soghomon Kilaghbian. □

## **AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian's Message at the 120th Anniversary Banquet of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York Held on June 10**

### **Dear Friends of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York,**

Greetings from the larger family of the Armenian Missionary Association of America extended over the five continents and from our President, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian. We are here today for a joyous occasion and a celebration. A celebration that marks the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York.

What is an anniversary one would ask?

An anniversary is a cause for celebration of a milestone in life, in this case in the life of a church that serves several purposes.

- It affirms and reaffirms the joy and satisfaction of a continued existence. The Celebrator feels good about its existence and realizes that it exists and is mandated to serve a purpose.
- The celebration is an occasion for others to feel good about the existence of the Celebrator. They express their happiness, joy and satisfaction about it and affirm that it means a lot to them.
- Finally, for both parties above, it is a moment of cheerful introspective meditation to evaluate the mission and reason d'être of existence.

For a church to serve and celebrate 120 years of existence there ought to be a few good reasons.

### **THE CHURCH IS IN THE RIGHT PLACE**

Yes, I am talking about Geography. I just returned from a trip to Armenia and Lebanon. We are all aware of one of the most incredible historical attractions in both current day and Historic Armenia. That of churches and monasteries built on the top of mountains and hills that lie in ruins and serve as great touristic and architectural attractions. Once upon a time, they were built on high ground to escape persecution and aggression. For today's worshiper, they are in the wrong place.

History tells us that long before the Genocide and as a consequence of the 1894 and even earlier massacres, many Armenians fleeing oppression and persecution in the Ottoman Empire answered the welcoming and illuminating call of the Statue of Liberty. They arrived in the United States of America through its welcoming gateway, New York. They were among millions of immigrants who passed through Ellis Island between 1892 to 1954 seeking freedom and liberty.

The City of New York became the first harbor for thousands of immigrants to settle and, as we read on the website of the AECNY, the Church of New York became "the oldest Armenian institution in the New York Metropolitan area. It emerged from the need to unite the Armenian immigrants who were looking to worship without fear of persecution for their beliefs."

Times have changed. Immigrants no more and not necessarily arrive in New York. For long though, New York has taken on another role in the nation. It is the place where young college graduate talents are seeking career opportunities and gaining valuable experience in life and business. Hundreds of Armenian youth are among them.

Over the life of the Church, whether for the immigrants seeking shelter and freedom or for the more current destination of young talents seeking to pursue and develop professional careers, New York is the right place for the Church.

### **THE RIGHT PEOPLE ARE IN THE CHURCH**

Stones and brick do not make a church. An active church is a reflection of life where faith is exercised, souls are nourished and the vision is always kept ablaze.

There is no doubt that the AECNY has had turbulent junctures in its 120-year journey and has faced many challenges. However, with the love and grace of God, strong will and determination of its successive lay and spiritual leadership, it has survived the tests of time.

Today, as we celebrate this landmark anniversary, we praise God for many people including:

- the faith of torch bearers, Rev. Nergararian and Rev. Khazoyan
- the brilliance of a superb Armenian community leader, scholar, historian, editor, longest serving minister at the Church, prolific writer, AMAA founder and executive, Rev. Antranig Arakel Bedikian
- the generous philanthropy of the Telfeyan family
- the wisdom and spiritual leadership of Rev. Peter Dogramji
- the dedication and loyalty of Hilda Melconian and other unnamed heroes
- the tireless energy of Trustee Chair Mossig Makhouljian
- the spirituality and remarkable humor of a relentless 'Kharpertsi,' Peter Kougasian



- the commitment, talent and energy of a Telfeyan descendent, Jennifer La Roe
- the many faithful ministers linking the chain of spiritual leadership
- the multitude of lay leaders faithfully serving God yesterday and today
- and, last but not least, the dynamism and energy of the young, dedicated and talented servant of God, Rev. Haig Kherlopian.

Praise God, for 120 years, the RIGHT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN IN THE CHURCH.

### THE CHURCH AND THE PEOPLE SHARE THE RIGHT VISION AND MISSION

We would not have been here if 'the Church in the right place' with 'the right people in the Church' had not 'shared the right vision and hand in hand led the right mission.'

The church of Jesus Christ is called upon to carry on the Great Commission and preach the Word of God and the Good News of Salvation to all humanity.

Borrowing from the Church website, the 'AECNY is rooted in the ancient Christian heritage of the Armenian people, which enriches understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ in belief and practice.'

In a harmonious effort and hand in hand, the Church and its people have been loyally and faithfully on the right track following the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a pleasant reality to remember that the AMAA throughout its history has closely intertwined with the AECNY. That legacy spiritually continues today and if you ever one day hear about a ghost roaming 152 E. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, New York don't panic, as it is the soul of the AMAA that resides in there.

A pleasant, blessed, and successful journey to the Church and the People of the AECNY in the service of God. □

## Armenian Evangelical Church of New York Holds Anniversary Banquet Celebrates 120 Years of Worshipping Together

The Armenian Evangelical Church of New York (AECNY), the oldest Armenian Church in the New York metro area, celebrated its 120th Anniversary June 10, highlighting a yearlong celebration that began in September 2016. The Anniversary theme was **Celebrating our Roots, Growing Branches, and Bearing Fruit for the Kingdom**, and centered on the words of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Vicar General of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Rev. Craig Simonian, Pastor of the Vineyard Community Church, Mher Margaryan, Deputy Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, and Rev. Jerair Bizdikian, guest Minister of the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ and guests joined the congregation for this special celebration. The distinguished speakers were Zaven



Benediction with Rev. Craig Simonian, Rev. Jerair Bizdikian, Rev. Haig Kherlopian, His Grace Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian, and Rev. Berdj Djambazian.

Khanjian, AMAA Executive Director/CEO; Rev. Berdj Djambazian, Minister to the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America; and Donald Wilson Bush, President of Woodrow Wilson Legacy Foundation. Pastor Rev. Haig Kherlopian shared his 3-Point Vision for the Church. Artists Milena Nalbandian, the Zulal Acapella Trio, and from the AECNY Jon Brothers, with Christina and Aaron Santana-Smith enriched the program.

Head of Trustees Mossig Makhouljian and Master of Ceremonies Paul Kayaian paid tribute to the faithful servants of the AECNY.

We praise God for the 120 years of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York, and pray for its continuing mission and work. □



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## Ordination and Installation of Rev. Joseph Garabedian As Pastor of First Armenian Church, Belmont, MA

On Sunday, June 11, the congregation of the First Armenian Church of Belmont, MA along with clergy, dignitaries, and sister church representatives gathered for the ordination of Rev. Joseph Garabedian into Christian ministry and his installation as the Minister of the Church. Rev. Berdj Djambazian, Minister to the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA), led the Ordination Service with participation from AEUNA ministers and a representative of the United Church of Christ.

Church Co-Moderator Jeffrey Dulgarian welcomed the guests and Rev. Dr. Shoushan Salibian made the Call to Worship with readings from Psalms and a praise in unison. Rev. Wendy Vander Hart of the United Church of Christ brought congratulatory greetings. Letters from AEUNA Moderator Rev. Dr. Ara Chakerian and AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian were read.

Nancy Tutunjian Berger, accompanied by Musical Director Levon Hovsepian, presented a moving solo of "I Surrender All." The congregation sang hymns and enthusiastically voiced their support for the candidate.

AEUNA Vice Moderator Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian, Senior Pastor, Armenian Memorial Church, Watertown, MA, delivered the sermon and charge in Armenian. Rev. Dr. Ara Heghinian delivered the sermon and charge in English, warmly recalling his days at the Armenian Presbyterian Church, Paramus, NJ where he first met Joe Garabedian.



After the Ordination Ceremony, Rev. Djambazian and the clergy proffered the right hand of fellowship to the newly ordained minister. The service concluded with a Benediction by Rev. Joseph Garabedian. □



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### Visit with Dr. Jack and Anitra Sheen

*AMAA West Coast Executive Director Levon Filian and Dr. Liliana Filian enjoyed a delightful Santa Barbara, CA reunion with Dr. Jack and Anitra Sheen and Joe and Joyce Stein.*

*The AMAA is grateful to both of these families for supporting our missions and ministries around the world for more than half a century.*

**L to R:** Joe and Joyce Stein, Dr. Jack and Anitra Sheen and Levon and Dr. Liliana Filian.





## Pastoral Seminar Held in Sochi

From June 6-10, 2017, an annual conference for pastors and ministers of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of Eurasia was held in Sochi, Russia.

Pastors and ministers from Russia, France, Georgia and Abkhazia took part in the conference where vital issues and topics of interest were raised. Topics such as "The Church in Modern Realities," "Church Evangelism," "the Holiness of the Church and the Servants," and "Creation of the Church" were presented and discussed.

On each topic, one of the pastors made a report and raised questions and solutions to the above topics. In addition, President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of Eurasia Rev. Dr. René Léonian conducted a review of the history of the Armenian Evangelical Church. Following the report, the block chairman held a discussion on a given topic which helped the pastors delve into the topic and take part in the discussion.

Another important block at the conference was the presentation to the pastors of information about their services with photo presentations. This gave all present a picture of how the Lord acts



Some members of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sochi, Russia, after Sunday morning Worship Service.

in various regions of the Union. It is important to note that the spirit of love and unity, the spirit of fraternal communication and the sharing of experience of service in different regions of the Union were present at the conference.

At the end of the conference, everyone received Holy Communion, which once again emphasized unity in Christ Jesus. The last day was also significant because pastors and ministers participated in the Divine Service of the Armenian Evangelical Church in the city of Sochi, and had the opportunity to worship God together.

All pastors and ministers returned to their cities and countries to continue the work of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Next year, the Union plans to organize a conference where all ministers will be able to receive renewal and with fresh strength continue the work of God, for His glory and for the building up of the Church of Christ.

Currently in Eurasia there are eight Armenian Evangelical churches and one Fellowship. Georgia having large numbers of native Armenians has six churches - one is Tbilisi, three in Akhalkalak, one is Akhaltske and one is Sochumi. In Russia there are two Armenian Evangelical churches - one is Moscow, one in Sochi and a Fellowship in Armavir.

The Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Eurasia is one of AMAA's mission fields. □



Some of the pastors and leaders of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Russia and Georgia participate in the Seminar.



# An Enchanted Summer Evening Supports Haigazian University and Celebrates Rev. Dr. John Markarian's 100<sup>th</sup>

By Gilda Buchakjian (Kupelian)

**O**n the occasion of the upcoming Centennial of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), a splendid program organized by the Development Committee of Haigazian University (HU) of Beirut was a fitting occasion to celebrate the centenary of Rev. Dr. John Markarian, the Founding President of the University. The elegant gala, attended by alumni and supporters of the University, was graciously hosted on Saturday, July 22, 2017 at the residence of alumnus Andreas Roubian in Saddle River, NJ.

Describing the only Armenian university in the Diaspora as the "jewel" of the Middle East, the Master of Ceremonies, alumnus Serge Buchakjian spoke of the culture of "academic excellence inspired by our heritage" that HU has fostered over the years. The unwritten mission of the institution, as the MC deftly qualified, was being a "bridge linking students of diverse backgrounds, a beacon of hope and peace, reflecting the cosmopolitan pluralistic society where it is located." Poignant testimonials from HU graduates spoke volumes about the significance of this unique institution of higher learning.

The opening prayer was delivered by the West Coast Executive Director of the AMAA Levon Filian. As he described how a painting differs from a masterpiece, Mr. Filian drew from the Biblical narrative, and likened the attendees to masterpieces in the image of the Creator.

Executive Director/CEO of the AMAA Zaven Khanjian spoke of the achievements of the AMAA in the Diaspora and in Armenia, and Haigazian University as "the product of vision, and sacrifice" which inspired the present. And looking into the impending future, Khanjian said, "those who make up the AMAA with their talents, resources and contributions will guarantee the future."

On this most auspicious occasion, Mr. Khanjian presented a special congratulatory letter to Rev. Dr. Markarian from HH Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, Catholicos of Cilicia, a former student of Rev. Dr. Markarian's at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut during the latter's tenure in the early 1970s.

Joyce Stein, the daughter of Stephen Philibosian who was one of the visionary founders of HU, a member of the Board of the AMAA and of the HU Trustees and herself a loyal and unwavering supporter of the University, introduced the honoree Rev. Dr. John Markarian. Mrs. Stein recounted how her father and Steven Mehakian approached John Markarian, then a member of the faculty at Lafayette College, with the proposal to "change the



**L to R:** Rev. Dr. John Markarian, Inge Markarian and Andreas Roubian.

face of education in the Middle East." Rev. Dr. Markarian, "the very fitting, unflappable, intrepid academic, with a sense of humor" took on the challenge thus launching HU. He created an environment for academic excellence, which continues to this day under the capable presidency of Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian. She then awarded the honoree a rare photo representing his early years in Beirut.

Prior to the heartwarming celebration of his 100th birthday with cakes and communal wishes, Rev. Dr. Markarian thanked all those instrumental in the success of HU. And in characteristic humility, he said that his work has "been a privilege rather than a chore." He highly praised the current administration at HU under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Haidostian. He credited his family for joining him on his initial venture in Beirut, and his wife Inge for his youthful life. With his unique sense of humor, he imparted a gem of wisdom about longevity that centered on posnology, "the science and the art of joyful living."

The museum-like residence of host Andreas Roubian, a connoisseur and expert of Aivazovsky, was replete with a myriad paintings by Ivan Aivazovsky, an impressive representation of Russian and Napoleonic art. Roubian has spent his entire life researching and collecting Aivazovsky's paintings, and his collection is considered by some the world's most important outside of Russia.

Sotheby's Chairman, Americas, and Senior Auctioneer, Benjamin Doller, a senior expert in 19th century European Art,



focused on Aivazovsky's legacy and how Andy Warhol was mesmerized with Aivazovsky's art. Mr. Doller, who is also involved in charitable causes to benefit education, expressed his appreciation for Roubian's involvement in philanthropy, and credited the host with being a true collector, acquiring art because he primarily loved and appreciated its beauty.

Dr. Ani Darakjian, dedicated Chairperson of the Haigazian University Board of Trustees, and granddaughter of Rev. Dikran Antreassian, Chair of the Musa Dagh Defense Council during the Armenian Genocide (the real-life clergyman portrayed in the film "The Promise"), congratulated Rev. Dr. Markarian for his two tenures as the proficient President of the University. She commended the academic contribution of the University to all learners of the region, and especially for "providing a chance to those who cannot afford it."

Current HU President, Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, forwarded his heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to Rev. Dr. Markarian for his pioneering role and innovative work, and to the AMAA for its momentous and far-reaching accomplishments.

A welcome surprise announcement was the generous contribution of Tina and David Segel to underwrite the cost of updating the HU website.

The enchanting musical interlude, interspersed with enthusiastic applause, was provided by the talented soloist Liliana Natalie Buickians, and pianist Kurt Eric Galvan who played expertly on a 19th century Steinway. The well-selected repertoire, included renditions by Italian and French composers, and culminated in much appreciated Armenian songs by Gomidas.

Warm words of appreciation were addressed to the guests and supporters of Haigazian University, to the Co-Chairs of the HU Development Committee Serge Buchakjian and Tina Segel, to the hosts Andreas and Priya for their superb hospitality and home-prepared delectable buffet, to the AMAA leadership, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, and the AMAA staff, to all the speakers, to Anita Buchakjian for her indispensable assistance at the gala, and to Dro Abrahamian and Maria Bakalian at HU for their support, and to Rev. Dr. Haidostian for his remarkable work at HU.

To conclude in the words of Serge Buchakjian, "after 62 years of existence, resilience, and excellence," the hope is to continue to support Haigazian University. The quote from Winston Churchill sums it all: "we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." □



**L to R:** Andreas Roubian, Priya Katra, Rev. Dr. John and Inge Markarian, Serge Buchakjian, Drs. Ani and Nazareth Darakjian.



Anita Buchakjian helps Rev. Dr. John Markarian cut his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Cake.

## Photo Brings Back Memories

**A**MAA News recently received a note from a reader, Louise Boghosian Glenning, regarding the photo of Evangelical Pastors and Leaders that we used on the back cover of the Jan/Feb/March 2017 issue. Louise was able to identify her maternal great-grandfathers Benjamin Janjigian (far left, bottom row, dark suit) and Rev. Vahan Tamzarian (third from right, bottom row, hat in hand) in the photo, which was taken in Boston in 1908. Her grandparents Shavarsh Janjigian and Louise Tamzarian, the children of these two leaders, were married in 1917. Our reader Louise was pleased to know that these two men were involved together in leadership roles. Thank you, Louise!

If you are able to help us identify others in this historic photo (or other historic photos), please send us an email at [amaanews@amaa.org](mailto:amaanews@amaa.org) with the names and location of the other men in the photo.





# Campaigning for the Second Century

## AMAA Campaign Holds Regional Reception

**T**he AMAA Campaign *Faithful to Our Legacy... Embracing the Future* has raised \$5.4 million of its \$20 million goal since the Campaign officially launched October 8, 2016. The priorities of this Campaign remain funding major capital improvements, establishment of endowment funds and support to the annual operating budget. The AMAA adopted a strategy to reach members and friends, coast-to-coast, via Campaign receptions with the help of regional hosts.

Pennsylvania was first on the list with an event hosted by Dr. Eileen Chopourian Stephey, Thomas Momjian and Karen Bogosian, on February 4 at the Villanova Golf Club in Villanova, PA. This initial event was a wonderful gathering of old friends and new.

April saw two events, one hosted by Hratch and Helga Sarkis at their home in Los Angeles on April 14 and the other hosted by Sebouh and Sara Gueyikian at their home in the Chicago area of Inverness, IL on April 29.

On May 6, Dr. Hrag Marganian hosted a wonderful outdoor reception in Fullerton, CA; May 13, John and Michele Simourian hosted a beautiful and intimate dinner reception at their home in the Boston area; on June 24, Antonio and Carol Bezirgianian Perez hosted a lovely reception at their home and most recently, on July 22, Andreas Roubian opened his home to an enchanted summer reception which featured Mr. Roubian's splendid collection of artwork by the renowned painter Ivan Aivazovsky.

In addition to raising support for the Centennial Campaign, the intent of these receptions is to connect members and friends with AMAA leadership and to celebrate AMAA's impact on people we serve. Part fundraising and part friendraising, each reception has held individual and unique local touches.

AMAA leadership is excited about the progress thus far. They will continue to travel in the months ahead to meet members and friends and find new ways to raise funds to meet the Centennial Campaign's goal of \$20 million. The April 14 event hosted by the



At Hratch and Helga Sarkis' residence in Los Angeles, CA. Hratch Sarkis pictured on the left.



At Hratch and Helga Sarkis' residence. AMAA President Dr. Nazareth Darakjian highlights the Campaign's goals.



At Villanova Golf Club, Villanova, PA.



At Hratch and Helga Sarkis' residence. **Standing L to R:** Charles Ghailian and Helga Sarkis. **Seated L to R:** Julia Ghailian, Dr. Mihran and Elizabeth Agabian.



Sarkis' singlehandedly raised over \$400,000. As AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian stated "AMAA's Centennial Campaign embodies vehicles, endorses missions, empowers imagination, encourages 'homecoming' and enables potential moves against the tide. The AMAA's Centennial Campaign does not build empires or raise monuments. It builds and re-builds lives and resurrects hope."

We encourage full participation from AMAA members and look forward to building new relationships with friends within and outside the Armenian communities. ☐



At Dr. Sebouh and Sara Gueyikian's residence in Greater Chicago area. **L to R:** Dr. and Mrs. Sebouh Gueyikian & Sona and Zaven Khanjian.



At Drs. Antonio and Carol Bezirgianian Perez's residence in Greater Washington, DC area.



At John and Michele Simourian's residence in Greater Boston area, MA.

## Upcoming AMAA Centennial Celebrations Worldwide

**East Coast, USA** October 21, 2017

**Toronto, ON, Canada** May 19, 2018

**Sydney, Australia** March 15-18, 2018

**Beirut, Lebanon** June 2-3, 2018

**Paris, France** June 9-10, 2018

**Montreal, QC, Canada** TBA

**All Armenian Evangelical Youth Conference in Armenia** August 2-16, 2018

**Yerevan, Armenia** September 14-16, 2018

**West Coast, USA** October 20, 2018



# CENTENNIAL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

## Meridian School

With the support of our generous members, the AMAA provides educational opportunities for young men and women. It is vital that our schools are maintained at high standards to meet our mission and keep these schools as affordable as possible. To do so, part of the Centennial Campaign's focus is to raise the endowment funds for our schools around the world with a bold \$8 million goal; with \$1 million designated for the new 'Armenian Evangelical Schools in North America Endowment Fund.' Maintaining strong endowments will ensure the AMAA carry forth this important mission into perpetuity. The educational opportunities we provide are life-changing. In so many ways, this is essential to our future and the preservation of our heritage –the educated young people of today are the leaders of tomorrow.

## A Star at Meridian

Ani Karajayan, an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Charlotte & Elise Meridian Armenian Evangelical School located in Sherman Oaks, CA, says she is forever grateful for the privilege to attend such a unique school. "At Meridian, students not only learn subjects like English, Math, Social Studies and Science, they have the opportunity to learn the Armenian language, history and most importantly learn about their Armenian Christian heritage. Although we are in the Diaspora, schools like Meridian encourage us to keep our identity and live like rightful, true Armenians."

In March 2017, Meridian School had five winners at the Science Olympiad organized by the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (AESA) and received the "School of the Year" award. Meridian School students also won three awards at the LA County Science Fair. Ani won 2nd place in the Physics: Electricity and Magnetism category and advanced to the State Science Fair. She also received High Honors and Citizenship awards at School as well as Science Fair Awards at the LA County level.

The AESA Science Olympiad Committee Co-Chair said that several factors led to the School's success. He commented that the science teachers did a wonderful job teaching and preparing projects with the students, the students were motivated and had the support of their parents/families, principal and administration. Everyone contributed and made the AESA Science Olympiad activities memorable and successful.







# IGN

ARMENIAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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Born and raised in California, Ani began attending Merdinian School three years ago. Her father, from Turkey, and her mother, from Armenia, expressed "Merdinian School has been like a second home for our daughter. Everyone is so compassionate and understanding. We appreciate all that they have done to help the students grow not only intellectually but also spiritually."

"Parents appreciate the warm and safe family environment offered their children by the dedicated and caring teaching and administrative staffs at Merdinian School," said Dr. Vahe Nalbandian, Chair of the School Board. "We provide merit-based and need-based scholarships to our students, and School supporters can be rest assured that their investment in students like Ani and others is an investment in our future generation."

The C & E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School is the only Armenian Evangelical School in the United States. The mission of the School is to develop the whole child through a broad based curriculum that fosters academic excellence, Armenian and Christian education, and good moral values. The School strives to create a safe and nurturing environment where every student receives personal attention to become a successful and responsible individual.



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# CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN GOALS

## Priorities Breakdown

### CAPITAL PROJECTS

#### Churches in Armenia

New Construction: Gyumri Church and Center .....	\$2,100,000
Renovations: Alaverti-Vanadzor-Ijevan and New Church: Southwest District, Yerevan .....	\$1,000,000

#### Camps

Renovations: Camp Sheen-Shoghig in Hankavan, Armenia .....	\$1,250,000
Renovations: Camp Bedrosian in Shushi, Artsakh .....	\$150,000
Renovations: KCHAG, Lebanon .....	\$200,000

#### Schools

Renovations: Kindergartens in Artsakh .....	\$100,000
Avedisian School Fence and Walkway, Yerevan, Armenia .....	\$200,000

### ENDOWMENT FUNDS

#### Educational Funds

Armenian Evangelical Schools in Lebanon .....	\$1,000,000
Haigazian University, Beirut, Lebanon .....	\$4,000,000
Avedisian School, Yerevan, Armenia .....	\$2,000,000
Armenian Evangelical Schools in North America .....	\$1,000,000

#### Churches and Mission Development Funds

Europe .....	\$1,000,000
Eurasia .....	\$1,000,000

Health Care Missions Fund .....

\$1,000,000

General Endowment Fund .....

\$3,000,000

### ANNUAL OPERATING FUND

Mission and Service .....

\$1,000,000

For further information on ways to give, please contact:  
Magda Poulos at (201) 265-2607 or mpoulos@amaa.org





## Haigazian University Class of 2017 Bids Farewell

By **Mira Yardemian**, Public Relations Director, Haigazian University

**"We are keen to continue collaborating and investing more in Lebanon's stability, including economic stability, creating growth and jobs, as well as improving security and prosperity." Ambassador Christina Lassen**

On Friday, June 30, Haigazian University conferred 136 undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University's 57<sup>th</sup> Commencement exercises, amidst an atmosphere of joyfulness, pride and ovation, sometimes mixed with moments of high emotion.

Minister of Tourism Avedis Guidanian represented the President of the Republic Gen. Michel Aoun, Member of Parliament Hagop Pakradounian represented the Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berry, and the President of the Council of Ministers Saad Hariri was represented by the Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Jean Oghasabian. Among the attendees were MPs Bassem Shabb and Shant Chinchinian, the Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon Samvel Mkrdchyan, Bishop Shahe Panosian, and representative of the Commander of the Army and heads of the Armenian political parties. The capacity audience also included community leaders, representatives of educational institutions, and members of the Board of Trustees, parents, relatives and friends.

The ceremony started with the celebratory processional march by faculty and graduates on the notes of the traditional Pomp and Circumstance, followed by the Lebanese National Anthem and the Prayer of Invocation offered by Campus Minister Rev. Wilbert Van Saane.

Expressing his pride in the graduating class, University President Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian acknowledged the unwavering efforts and dedication of the parents, asking the audience to give them a hearty applause. He invited the audience to ponder upon the virtue and purpose of "education" saying, "in this era of ongoing change and uncertainty, the purpose of education relies on the renewal and development of the human being, not only through the academic programs, but through educating the souls and shaping the vision of the new generations."

In her inspiring keynote speech, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon, Ambassador Christina Lassen focused on the motto of the University, "*truth, freedom and service*," considering them as common values that the European Union also cherishes.

On *truth*, Ambassador Lassen said that it's a fact that this new generation is graduating at a time when the entire region and world are facing crises. However, she was sure that they were equipped to face those challenges, the same as Europe did after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

On *freedom*, she considered Lebanon as an example of freedom vis a vis its neighboring countries, urging students to safeguard and protect freedom of thinking, expression, religion and press, which are receding in the region.

On *service*, Ambassador Lassen pointed out that now it's the time to "find a new purpose in life," asking the graduates to reflect on how they can serve their respective communities, countries, and eventually the whole world.

The Ambassador concluded her remarks by adding two virtues to the University's motto: courage and devotion.

The graduates were then called to collect their diplomas from the University President, assisted by Deans Fadi Asrawi and Arda Ekmekji.

With a sense of accomplishment and gratitude, valedictorians Angie Kirejian and Rabi Riman thanked all the parents and University faculty, giving them the credit for shaping and equipping them with all the necessary education and skills to embark on their new phase of life..

Finally, after singing the Alma Mater, and upon the Benediction offered by the President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East Rev. Megrditch Karageozian, with loud cheers graduates threw their caps high into the air, thus joyfully marking the end of a four-year journey and confidently anticipating the commencement of a new beginning. □

## Haigazian University Board Holds Annual Meeting in Beirut Gala Dinner Launches New Presidential Scholarship Fund

By **Mira Yardemian**, *Public Relations Director, Haigazian University*

**O**n June 1-2, members of the Haigazian University Board of Trustees from the United States joined their Lebanese counterparts in Beirut, successfully concluding their annual Board meetings which focused on the strategic initiatives and future plans of the University.

The intensive week of preparations and meetings was paralleled with a Gala Banquet on June 1 at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Beirut. The auspicious Gala marked the establishment of a new Presidential Scholarship Fund and celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the University's Founding President, Dr. John Markarian.

Many of the luminaries from the Lebanese and Armenian community were present, supporting Haigazian University and its mission and the launch of this new Fund. The capacity audience included the Armenian Ambassador to Lebanon, Samvel Mkrdchyan, Minister of Tourism, Avedis Guidanian, religious leaders, political party heads, AMAA leadership and Haigazian Board members from the USA, benefactors and supporters, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the University.

"On this special occasion, as a concrete measure and as a long-term strategy of celebration of life, of giving, and of enabling others," University President Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian announced the new Presidential Scholarship Fund for students with special academic merit.

In line with Haigazian University characteristics, such as "Lebanese multicultural life, American liberal arts education, Armenian resilience, Protestant heritage, rocket science, bridge-building among nations and faith, leadership training, and competitive higher education," Rev. Dr. Haidostian considered this celebration to be a "legacy of warmth of relationships and a hands-on and caring leadership."

In his greetings, Executive Director/CEO of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Zaven Khanjian appreciated all the efforts pooled toward the success and advancement



of Haigazian University and renewed the AMAA's commitment in supporting the University in its mission in the Middle East, acknowledging its role as an "institution that mirrors the amazing beauty of the mosaic composition which is so uniquely the trademark of the country that embraces it."

The University's Public Relations Director Mira Yardemian served as the MC for the memorable evening and the prayer of grace was offered by the President of the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Near East Rev. Megrdoch Karagoezian. Students Minas Atamian (vocal) and Ari Vartanian (piano) graciously entertained the audience. A special video featured the President's List students and alumni sharing their unique experience of receiving scholarships for their outstanding academic performance. Former President John Markarian shared his gratitude and thankfulness via video from his home in the USA.

The event concluded with the cutting of President Markarian's celebratory birthday cake, and the closing remarks from the Chair of the Board of Trustees Dr. Ani Darakjian, who thanked everyone for their generous support of the University. □

### AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian's Greetings at Haigazian University Banquet

**I**t is a tremendous joy and privilege to share another happy moment with the family of Haigazian University in Beirut, an institution that mirrors the amazing beauty of the mosaic composition which is so uniquely the trademark of the country that embraces it.

This University not only provides a boutique education but it does it in an atmosphere which carries the prevailing kinship warmth to the boundless ends of our planet wherever its graduates disperse. In an area and an era where uncertainties abide, what is predictable is the bright horizon for a new wave of Haigazian University graduates. What is unpredictable is the bound of their success, creativity and imagination.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America reiterates our faith and support of this unique institution of higher education and wishes it well. May God bless Haigazian University, its administration and faculty and may the campus smiles of today fill the hearts of its student body for a lifetime.



# First High School Graduation Celebrated at Avedisian School

**O**n June 23, a festive celebration took place in the auditorium of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center. The Avedisian School graduated its first High School class. Teachers, staff, parents, and members of the Coordinating Committee along with staff and supporters from the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) attended the event. Rakel Dink, wife of the late Hrant Dink, Co-founder, Editor and Publisher of AGOS Armenian weekly in Istanbul, was the Commencement speaker.

Among the honored guests were RA Minister of Education and Science Levon Mkrtchyan, UNDP Armenia Representative Bradley Busetto, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Brazil to Armenia Edson Monteiro, AUA administrative officers, ASPU Rector Ruben Mirzakhanyan and employees of the Philological Faculty, and Diaspora Scientific-Educational Center, Heritage Party Chairman Raffi Hovhannisyan, Municipal Council of the City of Yerevan member Anahit Bakhshyan, President of the Yerevan Writers' Union Abgar Apinyan, Executive Director of the Armenia Tree Project Jeanmarie Papelian, and the WCC Armenia Round Table President Karen Nazaryan.

Following inspiring performances by the graduates, the Minister of Education and Science addressed the graduates, wishing them success, and congratulated the School and its benefactors on the occasion of the first graduates of the high school.

Rakel Dink spoke about the history and prospective programs of "Camp Armen" since the assassination of the founder of the AGOS Armenian weekly in Istanbul, Hrant Dink.

Harout Nercessian, AMAA Armenia Representative, introduced the School benefactors, Edward and Pamela Avedisian, stating that the Avedisians gave the children of Malatia-Sebastia District the



best gift one can give a child – quality education. Mr. Avedisian spoke with unfettered joy about the idea of establishing a school in his motherland and his sense of making its sweet fruits today. School Principal Melanya Geghamyan also spoke with great pride.

The diplomas to the graduating class were handed out by Mr. and Mrs. Avedisian, Harout Nercessian, Melanya Geghamyan and Rakel Dink.

The event, dedicated to the first graduates of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School, was also marked by another memorable event. A solemn opening of a room named after Hrant Dink took place and the honor of cutting the ribbon was given to Mrs. Dink.

After the event, Mr. and Mrs. Avedisian planted a silver fir tree in the presence of guests and alumni in the school yard in memory of Charles Bilezikian. Mr. Bilezikian was the benefactor of the pre-school building named for Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian. □

## Festive Concert Dedicated to First Graduates of Avedisian School

**O**n June 22, the Paros Chamber Choir with Artistic Director Raffi Mikayelyan and Conductor Ruben Karaseferian along with the Avedisian School Orchestra directed by Argentina Poghosyan presented a Concert at the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian Community Center and School Auditorium. The Concert was dedicated to the first graduates of the Avedisian High School.

During the Concert, the Paros Chamber Choir and Avedisian School Orchestra performed Armenian folk and spiritual songs as well as works by Western European composers. The audience warmly welcomed this most impressive performance.

Paros Chamber Choir is the world's only Choir where the majority of its members are disabled and wheelchair users.



The Avedisian School Orchestra, founded in 2016, has already presented a few successful concerts in its first year.

# The Year-end Harvest of the Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School

The C & E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School in Sherman Oaks, CA completed another year full of vigorous and fruitful activities. These include another six-year accreditation status by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC); celebrations of the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the School; a trip to the East Coast with a visit to the Headquarters of the Armenian Missionary Association of America; commemorations of the Armenian Genocide; end of year exams; and finally, the graduation ceremonies.

The Kindergarten section of the School held its Year-End Graduation Ceremony on Saturday, June 10. Twenty-five children, full of life, talked, recited, sang and danced in Armenian. The enthusiastic parents were delighted with their children's performance, and their teachers were shining with pride, witnessing the bold

and fluent expressions on the children's faces. A reception was held following the program.

The Year-end Program and the Graduation Ceremony for the Elementary and Middle School sections was held on Sunday, June 11. Festivities began with the American and Armenian anthems presented by the students followed by the Invocation by Rev. Joseph Matossian. Elementary section students recited Psalm 34, followed by group recitations and songs presented by the students of the Elementary and Middle School sections, addresses by the valedictorians and the presentation of diplomas and achievement awards.

Speakers for the event included Dr. Vahe Nalbandian, Chairman of the Board, Lina Arslanian, Principal, and Keynote speaker Nerses Aposhian, a 2006 alumnus. The celebrations concluded with a Benediction by Rev. Matossian followed with a Banquet at Verdugo Banquet Hall.

Congratulations to the graduates and much success in their future journey. □



## C & E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School Achieves Six-Year Accreditation Status



The C & E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School of Sherman Oaks, CA announces that it has been granted another six-year accreditation status by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC). In a letter to Principal Lina Arslanian and dated June 30, 2017, the Accrediting Commission for Schools notified the School of its decision to award a full-term of accreditation based on all of the information provided by the School, including the self-study report, and the satisfactory completion of the on-site accreditation visit. The six-year term of accreditation supports the School's continuing efforts to foster academic excellence, provide Armenian and Christian education, and instill good moral values in our children.

During the past year, members of the Merdinian School community spent many dedicated hours seriously evaluating the School's program. The School community representatives worked side-by-side with the administration, faculty, staff and student representatives in extensive examinations of all aspects of the School. With the information gathered, a comprehensive self-study report was written that reflected the overall nature of the School including areas of strengths and areas of needed growth. From March 12-15, the Visiting WASC Committee, consisting of four members led by Sandy Ammentorp, met with School committee members and observed all aspects of the School program. They later shared their recommendations and commendations with the School community. This report was sent to the WASC Accrediting Commission who, after careful study, granted the School full accreditation status.

The Merdinian School community is committed to providing a school that meets both the academic and spiritual needs of the students. Our capable faculty and staff, strong curriculum, and the love toward teaching and learning are among the reasons for that success. We promise to continue to pursue this commitment with great joy. □



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## Commencements and Year-end Programs Celebrated at the Armenian Evangelical Schools in the Near East

The months of May and June were filled with year-end Programs and Graduation Ceremonies at the Armenian Evangelical Schools in the Middle East – Lebanon, Syria and Greece – that are supported by the AMAA. We thank God for enabling our Schools to have another successful academic year and wish them many more successes in the upcoming years. Congratulations to all our graduates!

**The Y & M Philibosian Armenian Evangelical College** (Beirut, Lebanon) held its Commencement Service on July 1 on the School campus. After the Lebanese and the Armenian anthems, the School Chaplain Garine Cholakian offered the scripture reading and prayer. Guest speaker was the President of Haigazian University Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian. During the ceremony Elementary VI students recited, the School Dzirani Choir sang and two graduating students played piano and violin. Awards were also distributed including The Raffi Manougian Achievement Awards which were granted to Mariana Karagulleyan, Gassia Kazanjian and Lori YOUNICISS. Valedictorian speeches were delivered in Armenian and Arabic. Rev. Hrair Cholakian, Pastor of the First Armenian Evangelical Church of Beirut, acknowledged all the School supporters and expressed gratitude to Dr. Zaven Messerlian for his fifty years of service as Principal of AEC. School Board Chairman Nerciss Baghdoyan announced that Dr. Messerlian has been appointed Honorary Principal and Vice Principal Dr.



Armen Urneshlian will assume the post of Principal in October 2017. The ceremony ended with the pastoral Benediction of Rev. Cholakian.

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**Armenian Evangelical Central High School** (Ashrafieh, Beirut, Lebanon) When fourteen 12th graders and twenty-two 6th graders graduated from the Armenian Evangelical Central High School



in Beirut, Lebanon on June 29, the seniors not only relayed the torch to the next generation, but it was also accompanied by the quintessence of Psalm 145.4: "One generation will praise your work and recount your omnipotence to the next." And when students sang "My Small Armenia," it was so symbolic of the seeds planted in their hearts by their parents and educators. But those seeds, to prosper, need "vision, not dream," as Dr. Armen Eurneshlian pointed out, "that can be realistically planned and pivoted on the youth, the next generation, the real hope." Principal Maral Deyirmenjian's reassuring words that "plans and visions can be realized through faith in God and dependence on the intellect, which, when exercised properly, can take people to spiritual heights," complemented the guest speaker's words. The songs, poems and dances during the graduation ceremony were further echoes and manifestations of the same gracious spirit of this 95-year-old institution that is so "central" to education.

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**Armenian Evangelical Shamlian Tatikian Secondary School** (Nor Marash, Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon) held its Graduation Ceremony on May 13 at the School's Hassessian Hall. The Keynote speaker was Educator Garo Hovanessian. The program included songs, instrumental music, dances and recitations. After distribution of the awards and diplomas, Vartoug Balekjian, School Principal, addressed the graduates exhorting them to look for a victorious life, always remembering that it is the unanimous work that will lead them there and not running on their own. The Program ended with the Benediction of Rev. Raffi Messerlian, Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Nor Marash, followed by a reception that took place on the School playground.





**Armenian Evangelical Secondary School** (Anjar, Lebanon) held its Commencement on June 24. Pastor Hagop Akbashian, School Principal and Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Anjar, read from the Scriptures followed by the Invocation. The students presented a program of songs, recitations and dances followed by the distribution of achievement awards. The Keynote speaker was David Karayan, who emphasized the importance of lasting values rather than material values. The Program ended with the distribution of diplomas followed by the Principal's remarks and Benediction.



**Armenian Evangelical P & E Torosian Middle School** (Nor Amanos, Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon) held its Year-end Graduation Program on June 16. The Invocation was delivered by Rev. Sevag Trashian, Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church of Nor Amanos. Rosette Alemian-Mahserejian, Superintendent of the Armenian Evangelical Schools of Lebanon and the Director of the Publications Department of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Near East, was the Keynote speaker. She encouraged the students to always be proud of their Armenian Christian Heritage, to serve their nation and be grateful to the Torosian School. The Program included songs, instrumental music and recitations. After presentation of a video clip about the life of the students during the last academic year the diplomas and the achievement awards were distributed. The Program concluded with the remarks of Principal Seta Karagoezian followed by a Benediction by Rev. Trashian.

**Armenian Evangelical Bethel Secondary School** (Aleppo, Syria) June 25 was harvest day for grades 12 and 9 Armenian Evangelical Bethel Secondary School students. They worked hard all year to reach this day and harvest their "crops," the results of their work. This year the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Secondary School celebrated thirteen graduates from the secondary school and eleven graduates from the middle school. Following the Syrian and Armenian national anthems, School Principal Betty Yepremian offered the opening remarks followed by a prayer by Pastor Simon Der Sahagian, Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Martyrs' Church of Aleppo. The talented students presented a beautiful program of songs, music, recitals of poems, dramas and dances, which were dedicated to the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation as well as the reconstruction process of Syria. Rev. Haroutune Selimian, President of the Armenian Evangelical Community in Syria, presented diplomas followed by the distribution of awards to the excellent students



and to Betty Yepremian for her faithful service to the Armenian Evangelical Bethel Secondary School of Aleppo for 25 years. The ceremony ended with a prayer and Benediction offered by Rev. Selimian.



**Armenian Evangelical School** (Kessab, Syria) is celebrating its 165th Anniversary of faithful service of educating and nurturing the children of Kessab region with Armenian Christian heritage. The daily schedule of the School includes morning worship services, and celebrations of national and religious holidays. This year the graduation ceremony and Year-end Program was held on May 18 with 14 graduates, 5 students from the KG section and 9 students from the Elementary section. We congratulate all the graduates and wish them success in the coming years.



**Armenian Evangelical Kindergarten** (Kokkinia, Athens, Greece) June 7 was a joyous day for the Armenian Evangelical Kindergarten of Kokkinia. By the Grace of God, the School held its Year-end graduation program with the presence of clergies and dignitaries from the Armenian Community, parents and guests. The theme of this year's program were the months and the four seasons of the year. The children were dressed in colorful costumes representing the flowers and fruits of different seasons and presented songs and recitations from each season. On the screen a video clip presented the everyday life of the children in the KG. The KG Director Garine Jarbigian addressed the audience and invited Rev. Vicken Cholakian, Pastor of the Church, to present diplomas to the five graduating students. Rev. Cholakian thanked those who were present and congratulated and thanked the parents for entrusting their children to this KG. The program concluded with the Benedictions offered



by Archbishop Gomidas Ohanian of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Rev. Cholakian.



**Kohar Mesrobian Secondary School for Boys** (Tehran, Iran) held its Year-end Graduation Program on June 22 with 35 graduates. Currently Kohar Mesrobian School offers grades 6-11 and is the only school within the jurisdiction of the Armenian Evangelical Community of Iran. Recently the School received a special recognition of Excellence.



Congratulations to **Aram Babajanyan** from Evangelical Churches of Armenia, who graduated with a Master of Divinity Degree from the **Near East School of Theology** of Beirut, Lebanon. Aram has already returned to the Motherland and currently is serving as the Pastor of the Evangelical Church of Armenia in Apovian.

## Victoria Chopourian Gehrt Honored as Top Superintendent in Delaware



On June 1, Victoria Chopourian Gehrt, Ed.D. was named Superintendent of the Year 2017-2018 for the State of Delaware by the Delaware Chief School Officer's Association. She is the Superintendent of the New Castle County Vocational Technical School District. A lifelong educator, she has served as a Special Education teacher, Vice Principal, Principal, Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent in several school districts.

Victoria is the daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Giragos and Yeprouhie Chopourian, and the sister of Eileen Stephey and Vera Bailey. She lives in Kennett Square, PA, with her husband Tom, and nearby their son Matthew, his wife Elizabeth, and grandsons Jake, Ben and Will.



# Diamond Anniversary Celebrations of the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar Held in Los Angeles and Fresno

Celebrations to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar, Lebanon, and the birthday of German Missionary, *Schwester* (Sister) Hanna, who dedicated her life to help build and sustain this institution, took place in Los Angeles and Fresno, California.

In Los Angeles, a celebratory Banquet took place on June 23, in Glendale, CA to celebrate the School's milestone and to pay tribute to *Schwester* Hanna. Over 350 alumni, former teachers and pastors of the School, as well as community supporters were in attendance.

The Armenian Evangelical Secondary School with its Boarding School has distinguished itself as a life-altering institution for many young Armenian children in the Middle East. In fact, the Boarding School became home for over 40 Armenian students who came from Camp Armen Orphanage in Tuzla, Turkey, through the efforts of Hrant Guzelian. Through its open doors, Armenian students from Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Bulgaria, Iran, Iraq, India, Sudan and Armenia received quality instruction, Christ-centered teaching, and nurturing care.

*Schwester* Hanna Christenn, a young German Missionary, joined *Schwester* Hedvig Anticalin, *Schwester* Hanna Nishke and *Schwester* Marie Rock in 1959 in the mission field of the Bekka Valley where they ministered to the displaced Armenians of Musa Ler, post-Armenian Genocide. These missionaries were sent by the Hilfsbund Foundation, which had been ministering among the Armenian people since 1896 starting from historic Armenia, and later in Greece, Bulgaria, Syria and Lebanon.

*Schwester* Hanna, who speaks fluent Armenian, embraced the Armenians, saying: "I am German by birth, but my soul has become Armenian. You are my people and I am yours in Christ." Responsible for the well-being of the young children in the Boarding School, she soon became known as "Mama Hanna" to them. Taking on the role of mother, she met their emotional, physical and spiritual needs. Her selfless, dedicated service prompted many of her former students to travel across the globe, some from as far away as Australia, to pay tribute to her.

In addition to the dedicated service of the missionaries at the School, teachers and principals played a vital role in educating and shaping the lives of young children entrusted to their care. Honored were over 20 teachers who served within the walls of this institution and who impacted the lives of countless students. Heartwarming scenes of former students and teachers reuniting, sharing fond memories of their years at the School, were played out throughout the evening. Several decades have passed but the love felt and the joy seen on the faces of former teachers and students, thrilled to be reunited, created a banquet hall exploding with energy and excitement.

Special recognition was given to the pastors who faithfully served the Armenian Evangelical Church in Anjar. Those present,



**L to R:** Joe and Joyce Stein, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, and former Principals of Anjar High School Rev. Hovhannes Melkonian, Rev. Hovhannes Sarmazian and Rev. Nerses Balabanian.



**L to R:** Arda Melkonian, Rev. Hovhannes and Jeanette Melkonian, Nancy Bederian and Doris Melkonian.

in chronological order of service, were Rev. Hovhannes Melkonian, Rev. Hovhannes Sarmazian, and Rev. Nerses Balabanian. Also acknowledged were ministers who are no longer with us: Rev. Aram Hadidian, Rev. Mardiros Marganian, Rev. Bernard Guekguezian, Rev. Manasseh Shnorhokian, and Rev. Hagop Janbazian. Unable to attend were the two most recent Pastors – Rev. Raffi Messerlian and the current Pastor, Rev. Hagop Akbashian.

On the occasion of the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School Diamond Anniversary, Rev. and Mrs. Hovhannes and Jeanette Melkonian made a generous donation of \$50,000 to the School. Early in their ministry, Rev. and Mrs. Melkonian served in this mission field with the four German and Swiss Missionary Sisters, Rev. Melkonian as the Pastor of the Church and Principal of the School, and Mrs. Melkonian as a teacher at the School.

Acknowledging the vital contribution of this institution to the Armenian community, Rev. and Mrs. Melkonian lovingly gifted to this institution so that the Lord's work may continue. The Melkonians stated: "We have many beautiful memories of our years in Anjar, where we experienced the joy of serving the Lord. We were blessed during our time there, and we want to be a blessing." An emotional moment for Rev. and Mrs. Melkonian occurred when Levon Filian, AMAA West Coast Executive Director who was a former student of Rev. Melkonian, acknowledged them for their gracious gift.

A rich cultural program was planned for the evening. Former students Arpy Aintablian and Vartan Kazanjian graced the audience with their beautiful singing of "Pari Arakil" and Edelweiss. In keeping with the Boarding School tradition, Rev. Nerses Balabanian led the audience in singing a hymn. On behalf of the AMAA, congratulatory words were delivered by Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, AMAA President. A PowerPoint presentation was prepared by Sevan Balabanian which documented the School's history. Finally, the traditional Anjarsti davoul – zourna accompaniment commenced an evening of kef which lasted until the early morning hours.

The Banquet Committee, spearheaded and inspired by the leadership and vision of Levon Filian, was comprised of Hagop Avedikian, Nancy Bederian, Pauline Ishkhanian, Raffi Kaldjian, Bagho Kasparian, Vartan Kazanjian and Doris Melkonian. Their hard work in planning and executing this event was evident as alumni and guests enjoyed an historic, unique evening, reflecting the Armenian and Christian heritage in which the students were nourished. Mr. Filian reflected, "The Banquet was a testimony of the seeds planted in Christian love bearing fruit in the lives of the next generation." Indeed, it was an event to be remembered.

The festivities continued in Fresno, CA with two events. First, *Schwester* Hanna gave her testimony during the Sunday morning services at the First Armenian Presbyterian Church on June 25. After an introduction by Mr. Filian, she spoke of her service to the Armenian community at the Armenian Evangelical Boarding School in Anjar for 20 years, to the elderly community in Lebanon for 10 years, and to the needy in the town of Bert, Tavush region of Armenia for 11 years.



Guests gathered at the home of Ara and Lena Karkazian in honor of Sister Hanna Christenn.

In the afternoon, over 50 guests enjoyed a lavish reception held in honor of Sister Hanna at the home of Ara and Lena Karkazian, hosted by the Karkazians and Hovig and Hourie Kerkezian. The event was organized by the Mousa Ler Association of Fresno, chaired by George Karkazian and comprised of Annette Kerkezian-Agulian, Salpi Karkazian-Adams, Varoujan Der Simonian, Hapet Garabed, Henry Keledjian, Ara Karkazian, Nishan and Arous Der Kalousdian. Varoujan Der Simonian served as the master of ceremonies, and Rev. Greg Haroutunian offered the Benediction.

The guests responded to Mr. Filian's appeal to provide financial assistance to the School by raising \$7,000. To thank her for her lifelong commitment and service to the Armenian community, Sister Hanna was given a special gift by George Karkazian. Sister Hanna responded, "I always pray asking the Lord to be my guidance. Today, because the Lord has been my shepherd, I am very happy; and by having you all in my life, I consider myself a very rich person."

Fresno area residents who have served at the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School in Anjar were presented with service awards. The evening concluded with singing well-loved songs and sharing of fond memories of their days at the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School of Anjar. □



Glendale area Banquet Committee members celebrate with Sister Hanna Christenn.



# Major Influences that Continue to Shape My Life

By Harley Surmeian\*

One would think that after two years in college that I would already know everything I need to know to master college life. Yet, even at the start of my third year, I am already experiencing so many new things and learning so much about life and myself. Through all the craziness that this life brings, however, I have found the few constants in my life that I could not live without and continue to shape me in so many ways. Without my faith, culture, family and friends, I am not really sure where I would be today, a fact that scares me to think about.

Faith is definitely the most important part of my life. As God commands us to put Him first before everything else in our lives, this year I have learned just how important this is to my well-being. My faith gives me a purpose in life, so that I am happy to wake up every morning living for Him. However, sometimes in the craziness of college we get lost in our own world so easily and forget about Him, pursuing goals and people that do not properly align with what God wants for us. God is completely sovereign over everything, and He knows what is best for us. He has reminded me of that a lot this year, and I am so thankful for Him in my life to keep me focused on what really matters in life, which is pursuing Him in everything that I do and giving Him the glory no matter what life may throw at me.

Due to the way I was raised, faith and culture are deeply intertwined, as it is with a lot of Armenians that I meet. The opportunity to strengthen my connections to both of these things has been a great experience for me. As a part of the 2015 AMAA Internship to Armenia, I got to see the story of my ancestors that I had learned so much about truly come to life; by seeing the Khor Virab and Mt. Ararat right behind it, I witnessed where the Armenian Christian faith was born. It made me proud to be an Armenian and a Christian. The most rewarding part, though, was getting to visit the people who lived there, especially the kids at Camp Shoghig, and serving as a testament to them, knowing that there were Armenians from all over the world thinking and praying about them. That trip truly changed my life, as some of the people on that trip are now some of my closest friends.

In addition, serving on the staff of Camp AREV for the past 7 years has been truly wonderful, as I get to watch other young people give their lives to Christ in the same place that I did. It is so cool to watch God use me and the rest of the staff there, no matter the circumstances that brought everyone there. This past year I have also gotten involved with the West Coast branch of the Armenian Evangelical Youth Fellowship, where we plan retreats and other events to bring together youth from all the Armenian Evangelical churches on the West Coast. As an Armenian from Orange County who did not grow up among many Armenians, this opportunity to draw nearer to my culture has been very significant in my life.

All of this is important, of course, but without people like family and friends behind you to support you, you can't get very



far. I am so thankful to have many great people in my life to support me and push me to be the best that I can be. My family has always been very supportive of my love of science, and they have supported me financially as well as I pursue my biochemistry degree at UCLA. They also helped grow my faith at a young age, taking me to church and encouraging me to attend Camp AREV for the first time. My friends have been extremely crucial in my development as a person. They have encouraged me to come out of my shell and reach out to people, and have stuck around when I was going through tough times this year, always being there to listen to me and give me advice. I know without them I would be nowhere, and I am so thankful that God put them all in my life.

Faith, culture, family and friends: four things people need for life but don't often consciously think about how truly important they are. It has been very clear to me in my college career, and within the last year, that these four things are so significant to my well-being and that without them I don't know how I would be alive right now. They encompass everything that I stand for and what matters to me, and make me strive to be the best individual I can be. I am so thankful to God for providing them all to me and I am excited to see where they all take me in the rest of my college career and the years to come after that. □

\*Harley Surmeian is an AMAA Scholarship Recipient who currently studies at UCLA.

# Armenian Evangelical Holy Trinity Church of Kessab Rededication Brings Thanks and Hope

**U**nder the auspices of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAECNE), the rededication service for the renovated Armenian Evangelical Holy Trinity Church of Kessab, Syria took place on Sunday, July 9. The service was festive, bringing thanks and hope for peace and renewal. Present at the rededication were members of the leadership of UAECNE, local clergy, government officials and hundreds of worshipers and guests. The large church building, located in the center of town, was desecrated and totally burnt down during the brutal invasion of the Kessab region in March 2014.

On Saturday, July 8, UAECNE delegates visited the Armenian Apostolic and Catholic Churches of Kessab, as well as the Armenian Evangelical Churches



of Kaladouran, Keorkune and Ekizoluk, and had times of prayer, Christian fellowship, and meetings of solidarity. □

## AMAA Awards Scholarships to Needy and Deserving Students

**T**his year, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) awarded \$230,000.00 in direct scholarship grants to college students for the 2017-18 academic year. Eighty worthy students, who attend colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, received the scholarships. The AMAA Scholarship Committee is attentively and tirelessly chaired by Robert Hekemian, Jr.

In addition, \$15,000 was assigned for qualified university students in Armenia.

For over 45 years, the AMAA has helped thousands of college students with scholarships, thus helping them prepare for the future and relieving the financial burden that makes it harder to focus on their work. Moreover, since its inception, the AMAA has helped thousands of students from kindergarten to high school with tuition aid. The AMAA also provides financial aid to schools and institutions of higher education in the Near East, including Haigazian University and the Near East School of Theology in Beirut.

The scholarships granted this year were provided from several AMAA scholarship funds established over the years to help students in need. Students may request Scholarship Applications from AMAA headquarters in Paramus, NJ beginning in January of each year. The deadline to submit applications for the 2018-2019 academic year is May 1, 2018.



# Summer Camps

## Make a Difference in the Lives of Many

*The AMAA continues to support Armenian Evangelical Camps and Daily Vacation Bible Schools, making a significant difference in the lives of thousands of Armenian children and their families. During the summer months, the churches in Armenia and Artsakh, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Lebanon, Syria and the United States organized camps for different age groups. As many Armenian families cannot afford to send their children to camp because of the poor economic conditions they face in their countries, they receive financial assistance to cover partial or full expenses. The following reports are from a few of the camps which were part of this year's Summer Camp Programs supported by the AMAA.*

### ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH



Camp Sheen Shoghig in Hankavan, Armenia.

Summer Camps – the favorite place for children, where they camp with great anticipation and spend a week during their summer breaks from school. **Camp Sheen Shoghig** in Hankavan, Armenia opened its doors for over 1,5000 children and teenagers from all regions of Armenia, and **Camp Bedrosian** in Shushi welcomed over 500 children and youth from Artsakh and from Syunik region of Armenia. Every year the children come to the camps with great anticipation and expectations. And when they return home, they take with them lots of happy memories and smiles.

Each day of the camp was full of games where the participants learned how to work together, play games and share their victories with friends. They also had time to do arts and crafts and be acquainted with the history of the day's theme with images and colors. The children loved the programs related to culture, sports and Christian Education the most.

At **Shoghig Camp**, one week of camp was organized for children from "Shogh" Day Care Centers and one week was organized for Avedisian School students.



Camp Bedrosian in Shushi, Artsakh.

We thank God for the dedicated counselors who served in the camps. With their dedication, they conveyed the Good News of the Gospel and love of God to the campers, which resulted in life changing experiences. We also thank God for the AMAA friends and supporters who once again contributed to our camps through their prayers, donations and services.

### BELGIUM

This summer, the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Belgium organized two family camps.

1. **Camp for Turkish-Speaking Armenians** was held from June 16-18. About 120 people participated in this camp from Germany, Holland, France and Belgium. The main speaker was Brother Danial Günay. All the participants had a blessed time listening to the daily messages, and enjoying a time of fellowship filled with different games and other activities.

2. **Camp for Armenian-Speaking families** was held from June 29-July 2. The families came together from all regions of the





Camp in Belgium for Turkish-Speaking Armenians.

country for their annual family conference at Camp Limage. More than 80 members and their families took part in this uplifting camp, where Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian, Pastor of the Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church of Downey, CA, was the speaker. Badveli Vatche presented the topic of "Victorious Christian" and encouraged the members to grow in their knowledge of the Truth in Christ and in their dedication and service to deepen and enlarge the ministry of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Belgium.



Camp in Belgium for Armenian-Speaking families.

## BULGARIA



Summer Camp in Bulgaria.

In **Plovdiv**, camp was held June 19-24 with 20 children and 3 counselors participating. The children were involved in activities centered around the theme: "Does Jesus Love Children Today?" (Luke 18:16). They learned new songs, studied Armenian, put on plays and took trips to the Rhodope Mountains. In **Varna**, a weekend of Day Camp/Daily Vacation Bible School was held September 1-3 with 35 children and 2 leaders. The theme was "What Do We Know About our Armenian Bible."

## KCHAG Beirut, Lebanon

The Christian Endeavor Youth Summer Center in Lebanon, KCHAG, has been hosting numerous Summer Programs this season in an atmosphere of enthusiasm, volunteerism and hunger for Christian teaching and community building. Among the camps organized by the Armenian Evangelical Churches, three have already been completed and a fourth will be held late in August.

**The four-day Ladies Summer Conference** started on July 19 with 45 women participating under the guidance of several pastors' wives. The guest speaker was Ani Boymoushakian who focused on the theme "Strength that does not expire" as inspired by 2 Timothy 4:17. It was marked by valuable times of Christian fellowship and discipleship.



Ladies Summer Conference in KCHAG, Lebanon.

**The Christian Endeavor Young Adults' (Tchanits) Camp** (July 26-30) had 90 participants from Lebanon and Syria under the leadership of Rev. Raffi Messerlian. The speaker was Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian and the messages focused on Colossians 3:12: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." This was a chance to bring together young men and women from the two countries and create new friendships, and encourage the youth with the Word of God.



Christian Endeavor (Tchanits) Camp in KCHAG, Lebanon.



**The Children's Camp** (July 31-August 6) brought together 76 children and leaders under the leadership of Garin Haidostian. Nanor Akbasharian spoke on the topic of "Christian Kindness," based on Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." This camp was marked by a great sense of teamwork.



Children's Camp in KCHAG, Lebanon.

**The Teenage (Badanyats) Camp**, is scheduled for late August. KCHAG continues to be an uplifting center and its programs touch the hearts of the participants. It is a Christian refreshing space in the midst of so much turmoil. It is truly a place of blessing.



Teenage (Badanyats) Camp in KCHAG, Lebanon.

## KCHAG Kessab, Syria

By the grace of God, and with the support of the AMAA, a family retreat of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Syria (Bethel, Emmanuel and Martyrs of Aleppo and Kessab region churches) was held in Kessab KCHAG from July 31-August 5, after a six-year break due to the ongoing war in Syria. About 100 adults and children participated in this retreat/camp, organized and led by Rev. Haroutune Selimian.

The daily program included morning worship service, singing, Bible study, group discussion, workshops, social events, learning, praying, sharing and fellowship. The main theme of the retreat was "The Vision of the Armenian Evangelical Church" based on Acts 26:1 presented in four topics: What is the vision of the Church? 2. The importance of renewing our minds: How to live a fruitful life?



Family Camp/Retreat in KCHAG, Kessab.

3. The calling of the Church to Mission and to Unity 4. The role of faith in Spiritual Growth.

## CAMP AREV California

*By Rev. Razmig Minassian, Executive Director, Camp AREV*

"The harvest is plenty..."

This year Camp AREV located in Frazier Park, CA. is celebrating its 40-year Anniversary. Through the decades, its ministry has thrived only because it has been true to its mission: reaching our Armenian community, young and old, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Camp AREV's purpose is to help people establish a personal relationship with Jesus, walk in the path of righteousness, and truly live out our Armenian Christian heritage with the same convictions as our founding forefathers.

We just concluded a very successful summer camp program. Many first-timers enjoyed Camp AREV's program, delicious food, all the cutting-edge recreation, and opportunities to create friendships and memories for a lifetime. I can confidently say that God was present in our midst, the Spirit was truly working in the heart of every camper, and many came to know the Lord for the first time. This was a record-breaking year: we sold out two of the three weeks. We had close to 160 people for Junior High Camp, and more than 155 for High School Camp. We also broke the record for our Juniors Camp with 59 campers! Our topic was "Stayin' Alive" and our theme was the 1970s - in honor of the Camp's establishment in 1977!

God continues to change lives at Camp AREV. We heard so many campers' stories, witnessing how God is transforming the lives of these young people and bringing them closer to Him. Our guest speakers encouraged our campers to remain in Christ and that in Christ there was life. Through life in Christ, we not only enjoy life here on earth, but life eternal.

This year was amazing for fun and activities as well. We introduced our brand-new paintball course, which was a huge success for all ages. We brought back "CLUB SHED" which is our snack ship/gift shop. Our zip line and archery range were also very popular.





Campers enjoying sports games at Camp AREV.

We specifically thank God for our parents, counselors and staff. I also thank God for the Camp AREV Committee, the AEUNA, and the AMAA for their ongoing prayers and financial support. Their partnership is extremely vital for this ministry.

If you are wondering how you can impact the lives of Armenian youth in the western region, here are some ways you can be involved:

- Pray: That God continues to send workers for the harvest. Camp AREV continues to grow and that growth comes through seeking God in prayer.
- Contribute: Be involved financially. We invite you to partner with us in this ministry. Your contribution to our ongoing operations will help us advance the camp ministry even further.
- Dream with us: Your investment in our Capital Campaign will help us create a space that is not only safe and clean, but expansive and inspiring, with opportunities for kids and adults to be filled with the joy of the Gospel. Here are some options:
  - Renovate the Speaker's Cabin and the Lodge.
  - Add housing for campers and families.
  - Build staff housing for our summer, winter, and weekend staff.
  - Add Recreation Center and a pool.

## CAMP AREVELK EAST COAST

By Rev. Dr. Ara Jizmejian

2017 marks the eighteenth year of this wonderful ministry of the Armenian Evangelical Union. and it was a successful one. Camp Arevelk as always, is filled with great excitement and noise,

as well as fellowship, worship and Bible learning. This ministry has been under the supervision of Camp Director Sylvia Jizmejian since it opened in 2000. Camp Arevelk also falls under the purview of the Eastern Region Director of AEUNA-AEYF Ministries, Rev. Dr. Ara Jizmejian, and is made possible by the work of the Camp Arevelk Committee, counselors and staff who give of their time for this important ministry. Over the years, Camp Arevelk has been essential in developing young leaders in the Armenian Evangelical Youth Fellowship and ultimately, in the churches of the AEUNA.

This year's theme was Questions & Answers: Defending Your Faith, which is also the AEYF theme for the 2017-2018 school year. It is essential to provide our young people with tools to go into the world and promote the Gospel. Speakers for the week were Rev. Shant Barsoumian (younger group) and Rev. Jizmejian (older group.) The campers have quiet time every morning, as well as a Bible lesson and cabin time with their counselors. One of the things that sets Camp Arevelk apart is the time spent in studying the Word of God.

Every day, the young people have a session of Arts and Crafts led by Monique Pappas. Camp Nurse Arpi Sarian (along with Hermine Getzoyan,) handles the aches and pains (and homesickness) of the campers. This year, we have a new Activities Coordinator, Vatche Demirjian. Cara Haleblan, Rev. Barsoumian and Rev. Ara Heghinian were the Bible teachers for 2017.

During the week, we enjoyed both rain and sunshine as the counselors got acclimated to the Camp. With almost 90 campers and 30 staff, we had a busy schedule and a packed lunch room. Many of our counselors are first timers who have been campers before and, as they have said time and time again, "this is a completely different camp from this side of the fence." We have camper representation from Canada, the Eastern Region, the Midwest, the West Coast and Dubai. Our campers are a fantastic group of young people who are here to learn about God and fellowship with other youth from our community. It is a blessing to be able to minister to them.

We thank the Camp Committee and Camp Committee Chair Silva Orchanian for their work during the year. We thank the speakers and Bible teachers who taught our young people about the Scriptures and how to apply their faith. We thank the counselors and staff who make the camp happen as without them, we cannot have camp. We also thank the AMAA and the AEUNA for their generous financial support.

A special thank you goes to the parents who spent time praying for us every morning. They are going to be praying for the Camp and the AEYF monthly. This year, as every year before, was truly a blessing to all who attended Camp Arevelk. May our Lord be glorified through this ministry of the AEUNA.



Camp AREVELK 2017



The following is the translation of an article on Pastor Jiro (Jirair) Ghazarian in French that appeared in the July 19, 2017 issue of "Réforme" Weekly By Camille Andres. Pastor Ghazarian was born in Beirut in 1988 and holds a diploma in Education and Psychology from Haigazian University and a Master's degree from the Near East School of Theology both in Beirut. In March 2015, he was sent to Kessab, Syria as Pastor of the churches in the region.

# Pastor in Kessab, Syria

**JIRO GHAZARIAN.** How do you react as a young pastor taking up your first post in Syria, slap bang in the middle of a civil war? *With courage and faith.*

For each pastor, the first moments in a new parish often remain etched in his memory. For Jiro Ghazarian, that time was not one of joy or curiosity, but of real bitterness. "When I arrived in Kessab, I wept in my car – everything had been destroyed. It was worse than I had imagined. I realized that nothing I had learnt during my studies would apply here. All my enthusiasm and energy for getting people to change, for supporting them, collapsed totally."

Kessab is a special place. It is a village located in northwest Syria, on the Turkish border, that gives its name to a region comprising thirteen districts populated mainly by Armenians, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. "In 2011, there were 3,200 inhabitants; today there are no more than 1,088 of us left," declares Jiro Ghazarian. The site is surrounded by mountains and forms a virtual enclave within Turkey. For a long time, as it lay between sea and mountains, Kessab earned its living from tourism. Before the war.

## Haven

Kessab is historically important too: this land has been settled by Armenian Christians since the 11<sup>th</sup> century; it is also one of many places where they took refuge after the 1915 Genocide. The Protestant Armenians of Beirut, where Pastor Jiro Ghazarian was brought up, used to hold summer camps and pastoral meetings here.

Then, in 2015, Kessab fell. The attackers, "six rebel groups," came from the Turkish border. "There was no way they could get through any of the other provinces, since they were controlled by Bashar el Assad's forces," explains Jiro; like a majority of the Christians on the spot, he considers they are protected by the current Syrian President.

The inhabitants fled and took refuge with the Orthodox community in Lattakia, a town situated a little further south on the shores of the Mediterranean.

For three months Kessab was ransacked: "Sofas, clothing, farm machinery, decorations, wines and spirits, household appliances: the terrorists took everything." They fouled, destroyed, covered with graffiti, and burnt everything they could, including the church and all its documents, along with the pianos and computers at the Armenian Cultural Center.

This is the field of ruins that the young graduate came to. For two months, he remained "lost for words" and incapable of organizing any pastoral activities.

Then he reacted; the time had come to rebuild. So, he set up meetings for teenagers and young people. "I asked them to write down the questions that occurred to them. Within a few minutes there were over a hundred. 'Why does God allow this, why us?' they asked, finally giving voice to their feelings."

During the two years he lived on the spot there were no further attacks like this one, but against a background of occasional rocket attacks Jiro Ghazarian developed his own answers. "This horror has nothing to do with God. I believe that God is not evil. Evil is a reflex action. I believe that when you kill, even to protect your nearest and dearest, thought is blanked out; you no longer realize what you are doing, particularly if you are on drugs or

medication like many fighters."

In a world where "chaos is becoming the norm" and where discussion, de facto, no longer rules, Jiro Ghazarian endeavors to "put back thought" where he can. "I have learnt that the same human being can write a sublime symphony and destroy it. I believe you can always choose between good and evil, even in wartime." The young pastor creates short sketches on conflict, for the teenagers.

"If they disagree, their first reaction is often to hit out. I explain that there are other ways of resolving problems. Syria is in need of an enormous process of healing and conflict resolution."

For the war has profoundly changed its inhabitants. "After the attack suffered by Kessab I saw some Christians change. There are crimes and lies that have not been addressed. Time is needed. We are rebuilding. But people have lost trust in themselves and in others."

How can a discourse of trust, of relationship be restored? How can the need to share and open up be preached in the very place where all that has disappeared? "It has meant reinterpreting Christianity in a situation where it has been misunderstood. God is not the almighty who kills, but a weakling heading for the Cross. The point when our suffering and fear are greatest is ironically the time when we can become the strongest. If you are skydiving, your fear will be greatest when you have to jump from the plane. But within a minute you will realize that it is the best experience in your life, because you are flying and that is something you have never done before." He smiles: "It's what I call resurrection. Human life consists in fighting death, fighting your fears, and these are very powerful enemies."

## Chaos becoming the norm

The people living in Kessab experience fear on a daily basis, the fear of bombs and rockets, of imminent attack, of losing their life. Is that suffering essential to bring out the best in us? "I don't believe God wants to make us suffer, but Jesus taught us that we will undergo suffering. Unfortunately, in order to confront day-to-day reality in wartime, you have to kill things in yourself: your pride, believing you know what is good or evil, thinking that you will live to be very old, and so on. Everything is chaotic, chaos becomes normal, and that is frightening, because it can undermine all your convictions," explains Jiro Ghazarian.

The young pastor is committed to stay in his job in Kessab for at least three years. "I have learnt here that the only freedom that cannot be taken from you is the way you react to a situation. When you can control your reactions, any suffering you go through is no longer meaningless, but acquires meaning, because you choose whether to respond or not, and in what way."

Whilst many of his friends are seeking to leave the Middle East and return to living in Armenia on the land of their ancestors, Jiro Ghazarian's aim is to witness to the Christian presence in the Middle East through his daily work and his tenacity. "We can choose to make our world a more beautiful place—by having a better approach toward other people, and showing it." □

100 | Portrait

## Pasteur à Kessab, en Syrie

**JIRO GHAZARIAN.**

Comment réagit-on lorsque, tout jeune pasteur, on se voit confier un premier poste en Syrie, au milieu d'une guerre ? Avec courage et foi.



« Le mal est un réflexe quand on tue, on ne pense plus, surtout si l'on voit sous l'empire de dragons »

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Պատ. Ժիրայր Ղազարեան\*

Համաշխարհային զարգացումներու մասին երբ խօսինք կամ մտածենք, ընդհանրապէս գիւղերը շատ նկատի չենք առնել կամ չենք յիշեր: Սակայն, սփիւռքի մէջ, մանաւանդ հայ ազգին համար՝ Քէսապը եւ Անճարը այն երկու գիւղերն են որոնք ցնցող տպաւորութիւն կը թողուն եւ թողած են ամէն-Հայանհատի հոգիին մէջ: Հետեւաբար այս գիւղերը եւ անոնց մէջ գտնուող մշակոյթը, Քրիստոնէական կենցաղը եւ յարատեւութիւնը, յոյս կը սփռեն ամէն կողմ:

Հայ Աւետարանական Ծարժումի հաստատումէն մի քանի տարի ետք, արդէն իսկ Քէսապ կը հասնին քարոզիչներ եւ միսիոնարներ որպէսզի Աստուծոյ Խօսքը քարոզեն եւ խողները գործնական կերպով եւ ճշմարտութեամբ մօտենան Աստուծոյ (Յակոբոս 4:8)՝ Կիլիկիոյ թագաւորութեան վերջին կտոր հողին վրայ:

Բայց, ընթացքին այս բարեխիտ ժողովուրդը կ'ապրի աղէտներ, տեղահանութիւններ, սակայն Յարութեան զարմանալի զօրութիւնով կը վերակենդանացնէ իր հոգեւոր, ազգային եւ մշակութային կեանքը: Հետեւաբար, վերջին ապացոյցը այս վերակենդանութեան Մարտ 2014-ի տեղահանութենէն ետք «խաւարը լոյսին մէջ չպարունակուելու» կեցումաձքը, պատգամ կը փոխանցէ աշխարհին, թէ Հաւատքով լեցում չայլ, իր պաշտած Աստուծոյն նկարագիրը կ'ունենայ եւ Անոր զօրութեամբ կարող կ'ըլլայ ամէն բան ընել:

Եթէ կարելի պիտի ըլլայ Քէսապի եւ շրջանի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներուն մասին պատկեր մը ներկայացնել, կը խորհիմ կրնանք նմանցնել Աւետարան ըստ Յովհաննուի առաջին գլխուն մէջ յիշուած պատմութեան, ուր կը կարդանք՝ ինչպէս Յիսուս Փիլիպպոսը եւ Նաթանայէլը կը կանչէ, որպէսզի անոնք Աստուծոյ հաւատարիմ ծառաները ըլլան: Բայց Նաթանայէլ շատ հեզնական հարցում մը կը հարցնէ երբ կը լսէ թէ Յիսուս իր գտնուած շրջանին մէջ կը շրջի. եւ հարցումը հետեւեալն է.՝ «Նազարէթէն կարելի՞ է որ աղէկ բան ելլէ»: Անշուշտ այս հարցումը տարօրինակ հարցում մը չէ երբ քաղաքի մը մէջ ծնած եւ մշակուած է անձ մը: Քաղաքներու մէջ մարդիկ շատ ատեն իրենց զրոյցներու ընթացքին հարց կու տան գիւղերու մասին երբ կը խօսին թէ «աս» կամ «ան» գիւղէն

կարելի՞ է որ աղէկ բան ելլէ: Թերեւս համաշխարհայնացումի ակնոցով դիտուած, յառաջացումը գիւղերուն մէջ բախդատաբար դանդաղ է: Սակայն այսօր եթէ աշխարհի հարց կու տայ եթէ Քէսապէն աղէկ բան կ'ելլէ, մենք կ'ուզենք վստահեցնել թէ Քէսապը կ'ապրի ամէն գնով եւ անոր մտահոգութիւններէն մէկն է պահել հաւատքը, եկեղեցին եւ ապրիլ հաւատքը եւ ըլլալ եկեղեցին:

Քէսապէն աղէկ բան կ'ելլէ՞:

Այս հարցումին պատասխանը հաստատ **ԱՅՈՒ** է, եւ աւելի լաւ պատասխանը Փիլիպպոսի պատասխանն է որ կ'ըսէ «Եկուր եւ Տես»: Անշուշտ Քէսապը իբր աշխարհագրական, Հայկական, ազգային եւ հոգեւոր արժէք, մեծ տեղ ունի մեր սրտերուն մէջ: Սակայն միեւնոյն ժամանակ անոնք որոնք կասկած ունին Քէսապի աւետարանական վկայութեան, կ'ուզենք Քրիստոսի նման պատասխանել եւ ըսել «Ասկէ աւելի մեծ բաներ պիտի տեսնէք...»: (Յովհաննոս 1:50 {բ}):

Յուլիս 9, 2017-ին Քէսապի Հայ Աւետարանական Սուրբ Երրորդութեան Եկեղեցին ունեցաւ իր նաւակատիքի պաշտամունքը, որու ընթացքին, հաւատացեալ ժողովուրդին դիմաց «Եկեղեցի ըլլալու» ծանր մարտահրաւերը դրուեցաւ, որպէսզի անոնք Քրիստոսի զօրութեամբ շարունակեն «աղէկ բաներ» սփռել համայն աշխարհին՝ Քրիստոսի եւ Եկեղեցիին համար:

Այս տարի մեր գիւղի այս զարգացումներուն հետ նաեւ կը յիշենք Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Ընկերակցութեան հարիւրամեայ տարեդարձն ու մեծ ծառայութիւնը Հայ ազգին եւ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին ամենուրեք: Մեր աղօթքն է որ Աւետարանական շարունակէ միշտ «աղէկ» բաներ տալ Եկեղեցիին եւ Հայ ազգին, եւ երբ մարդիկ հարց տան՝ Ընկերակցութեան պատասխանը միշտ ըլլայ Յիսուս Քրիստոսի տուած պատասխանը «Ասկէ աւելի մեծ բաներ պիտի տեսնէք»: □

\* Պատուելի Ժիրայր Ղազարեան հովիւն է Քէսապի (Սուրիա) Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներուն:





# Աւետարանչականը՝ Իր 100-ամեակի Նախօրեակին

Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Յ. Թութիկեան

**Յ**առաջիկայ տարի, 2018 ի տարեշրջանին, Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութիւնը, որ իր կրճատումը կամ փաղաքական անունով կը ճանչցուի որպէս *Աւետարանչականը*, պիտի տօնէ իր հարիւրամեայ տարեդարձը: Ան ծնունդ առաւ Ամերիկայի Արեւելեան Շրջանի Հայ Աւետարանական Միութեան Յունիս 7-9, 1918-ի տարեկան համաժողովին, որ գումարուեցաւ Հայ Աւետարանական Նահատակաց Եկեղեցիին մէջ, Վուստըր, Մէսէչուսէթ, Ա.Մ.Ն.: Արդ, ինչպէս Եզիպտոս նուէրն է Նեղոս Գետին, այնպէս ալ Աւետարանչականը նուէրն է Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան:

Աւետարանչականի ծննդեան օրերուն արդէն կը շարունակուէր Առաջին Համաշխարհային Պատերազմը եւ Հայկական Յեղասպանութիւնը: Ամերիկահայ Աւետարանական եկեղեցիները տակաւին լման կազմակերպուած չէին եւ տնտեսական տագնապի մէջ էին: Բայց Մեծ Եղեռնը բոլորքով էր ամերիկահայութեան սիրտը: Միտքերն ու հոգիները պատրաստ էին ամէն զնով օգնութեան ձեռք երկարելու Օսմանեան լուծի տակ ճնշուած եւ տառապող ազգակիցներուն: Ահա այդ դառն ու դժնդակ օրերուն, Մեծ Սպանդին գրեթէ վերջաւորութեան, ծնունդ առաւ Աւետարանչականը:

Անոր հիմնադիրներուն առաջին մտահոգութիւնն էր ճգնաժամային այդ օրերուն փրկել վերապրող հայութեան «Մնացորդացը»: Այսպէս, Աւետարանչականը իր օգնութեան ձեռքը երկարեց՝ հոգատարելու ցեղասպանութենէ վերապրող հայորդիներու ֆիզիքական անհրաժեշտ պահանջներուն եւ կարօտութեանց, միանգամայն մատակարարելու անոնց բարոյական, մտային եւ հոգեւոր կարիքներուն: Այդ օրերուն, միւս հայ համայնքներուն նման, Հայ Աւետարանական համայնքն ալ, զրկուած իր եկեղեցական եւ կրթական դեկավարներու մեծամասնութենէն, պէտք ունէր նոր առաջնորդութեան: Հազարաւոր հայ որբեր՝ ֆիզիքական սնունդի չափ պէտք ունէին նաեւ մտաւոր եւ հոգեւոր սնունդի, որպէս զի հայ «Մնացորդացը» վերապրէր: Այս պէտքերուն գոհացում տալու համար անհրաժեշտ էր որ գաղթօճախներու մէջ նոր եկեղեցիներ եւ դպրոցներ հիմնէր:

Ահա այդ դժուարին օրերուն Աւետարանչականը բախտորոշ դեր մը խաղաց հիւրընկալ արաբական քաղաքներու նորահաստատ հայ գաղթավայրերու մէջ կառուցելով դպրոցներ, եկեղեցիներ, դարմանատուններ եւ պատսպարաններ, որոնց մէջ հազարաւոր մանուկներ դաստիարակուեցան եւ անտէր որբեւայրիներ պատսպարուեցան: Սակայն տեղական անձուկ տնտեսական պայմաններու հարկադրանքը եւ ապագայ աւելի նպաստաւոր կեանքի մը հեռանկարները, պատճառ եղան որ հայ գաղթականներ շուտով ցրուին հեռաւոր երկիրներ, ինչպէս Եւրոպայի, Հիւսիսային եւ Հարաւային Ամերիկայի զանազան քաղաքներ, ուր հաստատեցին մնայուն բնակութիւն եւ գաղութներ: Բայց ուր որ Աւետարանական հայեր գացին, անոնց հետեւեցաւ Աւետարանչականի օգնական ձեռքը, եւ անոնց մէջ արթուն պահեց քրիստոնէական եւ ազգային գիտակցութիւնը:

Արդարեւ, իր սկզբնաձագ օրէն սկսեալ Աւետարանչականը լծուեցաւ կրօնական եւ կրթական ծառայութեան՝ օժանդակելով կարօտ եկեղեցիներու եւ կրօնական դաստիարակներու կրթութեան, ինչպէս նաեւ հանգստեան կոչուած հոգեւոր գործիչներու կենսաթոշակին: Կրթական մարզին մէջ՝ ան օժանդակեց երեսունէ աւելի մեծ եւ փոքր նորահաստատ դպրոցներու, որոնց մէջ 1930-ական թուականներէն մինչեւ 1960-ական թուականները՝ շուրջ 6,000 աշակերտներ կը դաստիարակուէին: Ժամանակի ընթացքին այս դպրոցներուն թիւը նուազեցաւ տնտեսական եւ այլ պատճառներով: Ներկայիս Հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցներու թիւը կը հասնի 20-ի, որոնք կը գտնուին մեծամասամբ Լիբանանի եւ Սուրիոյ մէջ, միւսները՝ Ամերիկայի, Յունաստանի, Հայաստանի եւ Ղարաբաղի մէջ: Անոնցմէ ամէնէն աչքառուն Պէյրութի Հայկազեան Համալսարանն է, որ Արտասահմանի միակ հայկական համալսարանն է: Համալսարանը կը կրէ Դոկտ. Արմենակ Հայկազեանի անունը, որ վաստակաւոր նախագահն էր Գոնետայի Ճենանեան գոլէճին (1900-1920): Համալսարանը հիմնուեցաւ 1955-ին, ամերիկաբնակ Տէր եւ Տիկ. Ստեփան եւ Մէրի Մեխակեանի բարերարութեամբ (Տիկ. Մեխակեան դուստրն էր Դոկտ. Հայկազեանի): Համալսարանի հիմնադրութենէն մինչեւ օրս՝ շուրջ 2000 շրջանաւարտներ ուսում ստացած են այս բարձրագոյն կրթական հաստատութեան մէջ, որոնցմէ շատեր ներկայիս կը գտնուին տարբեր երկիրներու մէջ, ուր կը վարեն դեկավար դերեր արուեստներու, գիտութիւններու, կրթական եւ առեւտրական մարզերու մէջ:

Բաց աստի, Աւետարանչականը նաեւ կը հայթայթէ կրթանպաստներ նախակրթարաններէն մինչեւ համալսարան հարիւրաւոր աշակերտներու: Գոլէճական մակարդակի վրայ երկու կրթանպաստի հիմնադրաժողով կան, մին՝ Պէյրութի Հայկազեան Համալսարանի համար հաստատուած ֆոնտը, միւսը՝ Միացեալ Նահանգներու համալսարանական կրթանպաստի ֆոնտը, որ միջին հաշուով տարեկան 200,000 տոլարի կրթանպաստ կը բաշխէ համեստ նիւթական կարողութիւն ունեցող արժանաւոր աշակերտներու:

Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութեան յատկանշական ծառայութիւններէն մին ալ անոր մարդասիրական ծառայութիւններն են: Հայաստանի, Արցախի եւ Եւրոպասիայի, ինչպէս նաեւ Միջին Արեւելքի եւ Հարաւային Ամերիկայի մէջ չքաւոր ընտանիքներու, սննդակարօտ մանուկներու նպաստ, դարմանատուններու եւ որբանոցներու օգնութիւն: Այս մարզին մէջ, ան նաեւ զօրավիգ կը կանգնի հայկական այն հաստատութիւններուն, որոնք կը ծառայեն հիւանդին, այրիին, չքաւորին, անկարին եւ ծերերուն: Ան կանոնաւոր հերթականութեամբ կը նպաստէ Հալէպի Հայ



Ծերանոցին եւ թերաճ մանուկներու ծրագիրին, Բերեզդա բժշկական եւ ատամնաբուժական դարմանատան:

Աւետարանչականը նաեւ նեցուկ կը կենայ հանգստեան կոչուած հոգեւոր եւ կրթական գործիչներուն: Ան նիւթապէս կ'օժանդակէ եկեղեցական շէնքերու կառուցման, մանկական եւ պատանեկան համագումարներու:

Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութիւնը յատկապէս ազդու միջոց մը եղած է աւետարանչութեան բնագաւառին մէջ: Ան աւետարանչական ոգին արծարծած է մեր ազգին մէջ: Անոր գլխաւոր մտահոգութիւններէն մին եղած է մարդոց ուղիղ յարաբերութիւնը Աստուծոյ եւ իրարու հանդէպ:

Իր ծնունդէն ի վեր, Աւետարանչականը յատուկ աշխատանք տարած է, որ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիները անդրադառնան իրենց առանձնայատուկ բնոյթին՝ ըլլալու **աւետարանչական** եկեղեցիներ: Աւետարանչութիւնը գերագոյն կոչումն է բոլոր եկեղեցիներուն: Եկեղեցին կոչուած է հանդիսանալու աւետարանչութեան ծառայող միջոցը: Աւետարանը իր բնոյթին մէջ իսկ կը պարունակէ իրողութիւն մը, որ բացարձակ անհրաժեշտ կը դարձնէ աւետարանչութիւնը: Այս իմաստով, Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութիւնը կը գանազանուի հայ ազգի միւս բարեգործական եւ մարդասիրական կազմակերպութիւններէն այն իմաստով որ ան իր շէշոր կը դնէ աւետարանչութեան վրայ՝ խօսքով, գործով եւ գործնական վկայութեամբ: Աւետարանչականի գործունէութեանց շարժառիթն ու մղիչ ուժն է Քրիստոսի անունով ծառայել մարդոց:

Աւետարանչութեան ազդու միջոցներէն մին մամուլն է, որ Աւետարանչականը շատ կանուխէն գործածած է: Ընկերակցութիւնը հազիւ երկու տարեկան՝ սկսաւ հրատարակել «**Լրատու**» եռամսեայ թերթը, Ամերիկայի մէջ, 1920-էն 1944: Յետագայ տարիներու ընթացքին, յոյս ընծայած է ան, կամ

հրատարակութեան օգնած է «**Աւետագիր**» ամսագրին, 1945-1947, "**News Bulletin**"-ին, "**The AMAA Record**," "**The Armenian American Outlook**" պարբերաթերթին: 1965-էն ի վեր ան կը հրատարակէ "**The AMAA News**" ամսաթերթը: Իսկ 1991-էն ի վեր յոյս կ'ընծայէ «**Չհաց Մեր Հանապազորդ**» առօրեայ հոգեւոր խորհրդածութիւններու եռամսեայ հրատարակութիւն մը, որ 30 հազար տպաքանակով կը դրկուի Հայաստանի եւ Արտասահմանի 40-էն աւելի երկիրներու հայկական եկեղեցիներու եւ հայերէն ընթերցողներու:

Աւետարանչականը նաեւ հրատարակած է տասնեակ մը հոգեւոր գիրքեր եւ բազմաթիւ հոգեւոր թերթիկներ:

Բայց ամէնէն աւելի, ան հրատարակած է Աստուածաշունչը Արեւմտահայերէն եւ Արեւելահայերէն լեզուներով եւ զայն տրամադրելի դարձուցած է հարիւր հազարաւոր հայորդիներու:

Ներկայիս, Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութիւնը ունի շուրջ 100 տարիներու պատկառելի վաստակ եւ ծառայութիւն համայն հայութեան: Անոր անդամակցութիւնը՝ ընթացիկ տարուան (2017) մէջ կը հասնի 22,000ի եւ անոր հասոյթը՝ 170 միլիոն տոլարի: Անոր տարեկան պիւտճէն մօտ 8 միլիոն տոլար է՝ յատկացուած 144 տարբեր ծրագիրներու, որոնց միջոցով ծառայութիւն կը մատուցուի հազարաւոր կարօտ հայորդիներու աշխարհի չորս ծագերուն տարածուած:

Վերջապէս, Աւետարանչականի պատմութիւնը՝ պատմութիւնն է տարագիր հայութեան, սկսած 1918-ի դժնդակ օրերէն մինչեւ ներկայ, բաղդատաբար, լուսաւոր օրերը: Անոր պատմութիւնը՝ մեր ժողովուրդի վերապրելու ճիգերուն, ոգորումներուն եւ անհուն նուիրումի պատմութիւնն է: Իսկ անոր նշանաբանն է սիրել մեր ազգի բոլոր զաւակները անխտորէն եւ ծառայել անոնց ամբողջական նուիրումով: □

## Meet Our Staff at AMAA

### Darlene Dreisbach, Accountant

In August 2016, Darlene Dreisbach joined the Armenian Missionary Association of America as an Accountant and is responsible for processing accounts payable, recording cash receipts, disbursements and journal entries. In addition to her daily responsibilities, she works closely with the Controller and Database Supervisor to monitor the accuracy between the accounting and fundraising programs. Darlene also tracks donations and expenditures for specific projects and reports them to the Executive Director/CEO and Finance Director on a monthly basis, along with other quarterly and annual reports.

After earning a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting at Ramapo College in Ramsey, NJ, Darlene started her career at Ingersoll-Rand Company, leaving after 10 years to start a family. She and her husband Matt were blessed with triplets, who are currently 18 years old. As her children grew up, Darlene re-entered the work place holding various accounting positions and gaining valuable experience. She is enjoying her new role at the AMAA, providing value to the organization and adding to the positive work environment in the office.

AMAA Finance Director David Aynejian stated, "In a short period of time, Darlene has gained a solid understanding of not only the accounting system and processes, but also of the AMAA and what we do throughout the world. At the same time, she has blended in with everyone in the office almost instantly. She is not just a welcome addition to the accounting department, but also a huge asset to the AMAA."

Darlene and Matt have lived in Dumont, NJ for 23 years where they raised their children Nicole, Matthew and Brenda. As all three of her children will begin college in September, Darlene is thankful to the Lord for them, noting Psalm 127:3, "Children are a gift from God; they are his reward."





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## A Book Review

# Points of Life By Rev. Dr. Vartkes M. Kassouni

By Rev. John Khanjian, Ph.D.

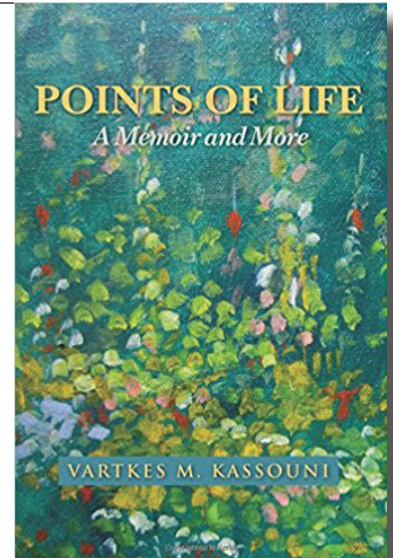
**P**oints of Life is the autobiography of Rev. Dr. Vartkes M. Kassouni who writes in such a charming style that it makes the reader think that he or she is reading a novel with a beginning, development, a crisis and ending. It is the story of a thoughtful Pastor who experiences life's positive and negative encounters and considers their impact on his life and ministry. The reader of these 251 pages will discover a man of deep faith who has an open mind and a heart inspired by the love of Christ.

The first three chapters cover his childhood on the Island of Cyprus during World War II, with all its adventures, and moves on through his adolescent years. Having committed himself to Jesus Christ and the ministry of His Gospel, he starts his journey out of Cyprus. After a three-month-long adventure in survival in Napoli trying to secure a visa to the United States, he finally succeeds and sails for America. His destination is Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC, where he was given a scholarship. Upon entering the pre-ministry program with its requirement to spend the weekends in doing evangelism wherever possible, Rev. Kassouni gains first-hand knowledge of the social and racial conditions of the South, while developing public speaking skills and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Subsequent chapters take him from college to the Biblical Seminary in New York City, his marriage, and the beginnings of a family. Graduation from Seminary opens up the world of service which began with International Student Inc. Later he moves on and takes the Pastorate at the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York and then moves to Fresno, CA to the pastorate of the First Armenian Presbyterian Church where his vision of a growing church is realized with the building of new facilities. For a break, he goes on a three-month preaching mission around the world which starts in Beirut, Lebanon, and continues with visits to Iran, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Japan. This was a very enriching experience which gave him a global Christian perspective on ministry. From Fresno, he moves to Los Angeles to take the helm of the United Armenian Congregational Church. In each of these churches he encounters unique challenges some of which come from the presence of two distinct parishioners: the American born and immigrant Armenians who have their own expectations of what a church should be and do. Rev. Kassouni demonstrated exceptional leadership skills keeping both groups within the churches and then moving them forward.

After a serious crisis in his marriage that led to a divorce, he moved out to the non-Armenian community and served churches of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Southern California: Palmdale, Tustin and Huntington Beach. He was called to be the Associate Executive Presbyter of Los Ranchos Presbytery in 1987 concentrating on new and redeveloping churches. That same year he married Samira Audeh and they settled in Orange, CA. He initiated Church plantings in such places as Laguna Niguel, Rancho Santa Margarita and North Huntington Beach. He also worked with various Latino, Taiwanese, Japanese and Korean churches in assisting them to grow. In 1996, having reached retirement age, he resigned from that position and took on several new assignments in Orange County and San Fernando Valley. Needless to say, in the course of these ministries, he encountered challenges and difficulties of social, ecclesiastical, economic and racial nature. These he faced and overcame with wisdom and grace.

Before concluding this brief review, it should be noted that the author made a very significant contribution to the Armenian cause by working hard for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in June of 2014. The book is informative, witty and honest. It is said, the devil is in the details; in this case, the delight is in the details where one meets an Armenian Pastor who is a pioneer in inclusivity and diversity reflecting the spirit of true Christian love. □



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Copies of Rev. Dr. Vartkes Kassouni's Book **Points of Life** are available at the AMAA Bookstore. To order a copy, please fill out the Order Form on page 51.  
Item # 381 - Price \$15.00

## BOOKS

**THE ARMENIAN ANSWER TO THE ARMENIAN QUESTION**, by Richard Melikian, *This book is not about the past. It is about the future.* pb #CO355 .....\$12.00

**ARMENIAN CHRISTIANITY - THE FAITH OF A NATION**, by Rev. Dr. Aharon Sapsejian, *A historical look at Christianity in the Armenian culture.* pb #252 .....\$10.00

**ARMENIAN EVANGELICALS' CHALLENGE TO RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM: The Growing Influence of Fundamentalism in Armenian Evangelical Churches.** by Dr. Arthur Salibian. pb #361.....\$8.00

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**THE ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL WORLD COUNCIL**, by Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian, *A Bilingual Book, is the History of the Armenian Evangelical World Council from its inception in 1978 through the year 2014.* pp. 397, hc #CO356 .....\$35.00

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**MUSA DAGH GIRL** *Daughter of Armenian Genocide Survivors, the author tells of her loving upbringing against a dark historical background.* 548 pp, #501CO .....\$30.00

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**SHOWERS OF GRACE**, by Arousiag Tovmassian Missirlian. *A Memoir of God's abundant blessings throughout a lifetime of Christian service.* #346.....\$20.00

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**THE TREATMENT OF ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE 1915-1916**, By Viscount Bryce. *Documents presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.* hc #14f.....\$23.00

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pb white - large #503 .....\$20.00

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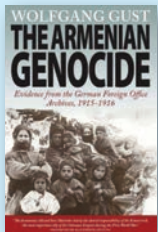
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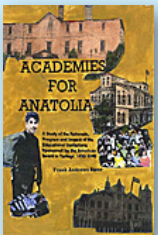
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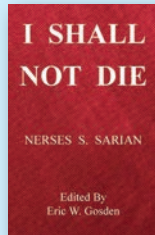
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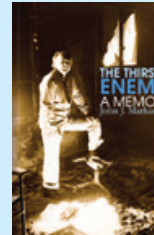
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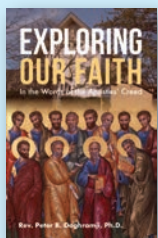
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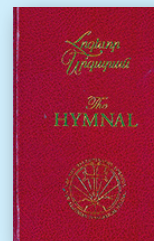
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## Շնորհակալութեամբ Ստացանք Received With Thanks

The AMAA acknowledges with gratitude receipt of the following new publications

**Armenian-English Diglot New Testament** - Bible Society of Lebanon

**Christian Ethics in the Muslim Context** by Rev. Peter B. Doghramji, Ph.D.

**Issues and Perspectives** by Catholicos Aram I

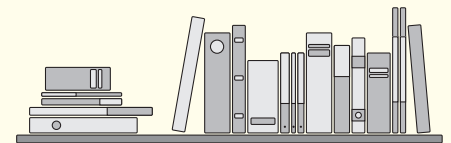
**Naim Efendi'nin Hatirati Ve Tala Paşa Telegrafları - Krikor Gergerian Arsivi** by Taner Akçam

**Points of Life** by Rev. Dr. Vartkes M. Kassouni

**Remembering the Dietary Department - AUB Medical Center 1945-1987** by Helen Wadsworth Mugrditchian

**The Tragedies and Triumphs of an American Family** by Daved E. Pressey

**Truth and Service - A History of the Near East School of Theology** by Dr. George Sabra



## Willis Dadukian

Willis R. (Bill) Dadukian of Ocala, FL passed away on May 9, 2017 at the age of 92.

He was born in New York City to parents George and Bessie Boyajian Dadukian. His father emigrated to the United States from the Sivas area of Turkey during the Armenian Genocide.

After serving in the US Army Air Force during World War II, Bill went on to graduate from the University of Denver with a bachelor's and master's degree in Personnel and Industrial Relations. He had a long and distinguished business career which included positions with Chance Vought Aircraft in Dallas, TX, Coca-Cola Bottling Company, the Hotel Salisbury and Duke Associates.

Over the years, Bill served on many Boards including the Hotel Association of New York City, NY State Hospitality and Tourism Association, Hotel Executives Club and the University of Denver Alumni Association. He served on the Investment Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America from 1988-2006.

He lectured at the American Management Association and was an Associate Professor in Hospitality Management at New York University. Bill was the first President of the Beta Gamma Chapter of Phi Kappa Sigma at the University of Denver and was a lifelong stamp collector.

He was a member of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City and an Associate Member of the Armenian Evangelical Church in New York City. In both churches, he gave his time willingly in whatever capacity was needed.

Bill is survived by his wife Kathryn, son David (Bianka) and two grandchildren, Alexander and Marlene. Services were held on May 13 at the Ocala West United Methodist Church in FL. Burial was in Bushnell FL with full military honors. □



when her mother became too ill to take care of her five children, Rosine left high school to help her mother raise her siblings. As a young woman, she learned to play piano and sing, and played piano at the Armenian Martyrs' Church in Aleppo where her family attended.

In December 1954, Rosine married Vahan Darakjian, a teacher and bookstore owner. They shared a love of music and affection for each other's families. They had four children: Arda, Aline, Rubina and Raffi. Rosine was a devoted wife and mother who excelled at homemaking arts including cooking, baking, knitting and sewing.

Rosine and her family immigrated to the United States in June 1969 to join her parents and brothers John and Berge in Los Angeles, CA. Despite her traditional upbringing as a homemaker, Rosine embraced her brave new world and studied to become a medical office assistant. Her compassionate nature made her ideally suited to her career from which she retired more than 20 years later.

Along with her career and caring for her family, Rosine was devoted to her church. When they first arrived in Los Angeles, the family attended United Armenian Congregational Church. Once they moved to Whittier in 1978, Rosine and Vahan joined the Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church in Downey. Rosine volunteered for many Church functions, prepared food on countless occasions, and sang in the choir rarely missing Sundays at Church.

Rosine was an unusually kind and giving person. She loved her family members equally and unconditionally. She didn't harbor resentments and tried to see the good in everyone. She had an uncanny memory for birthdays and never missed sending birthday cards to family and friends. Her hands were always busy: when she wasn't cooking and baking for large gatherings, she was crocheting blankets or booties for family and friends. Rosine wasn't a sparking conversationalist – you wouldn't describe her as "the life of the party." She was the quiet, organized one in the background, making sure there was enough food so the party could go on.

In 2005, Rosine began displaying cognitive problems and was diagnosed with early stage Alzheimer's disease. After Vahan's death in 2006, it became clear to the family that Rosine needed to be placed in a care home. She spent the final 10 years of her life at Just Like Home, receiving excellent care from the Armenian owners of the facility and her caregivers. Although she gradually lost all her cognitive functions, throughout the years and even in her final days, her kind, steadfast, and compassionate spirit came shining through. The world was a better place because Rosine was in it.

Rosine is survived by her children Arda Clark, Aline Hoffman, Rubina Darakjian and Raffi Darakjian. The funeral service was held



## Rosine Darakjian

Rosine Darakjian (née Nazarian) of Whittier, CA passed away on July 8, 2017. She was 89.

Rosine was born in Aleppo, Syria, on November 13, 1928 to Nazar and Alice Nazarian. She was the first of five children: Rosine, Knarig, Juliette, Jean-Nazar (John), and Berge. In her teens, Rosine demonstrated great ability in homemaking, and

on July 17, at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Hollywood Hills in Los Angeles. It was Rosine's wish to have donations in her memory made to the AMAA or the Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church of Downey. □

## Levon Dickran Gulesserian

Levon Gulesserian was born to Dickran and Verkinia (Nouskajian) Gulesserian on January 7, 1920 in Adana, Turkey, and passed away on May 6, 2017 in Saratoga, CA at the age of 97.



The youngest of five Gulesserian children (Puzant, Yulia, Mourad, Elizabeth and then Levon), his parents were extremely protective of Levon because two of their children lost their lives prematurely during the 1915 Armenian Genocide. In 1921, the family was forced to leave a well-established curtain business, bank everything they had, and board a French Merchant Ship bound for any open port. After many ports denied them entry, the family disembarked in Beirut, Lebanon. There Levon's father was able to establish his business, and the family began to heal, thrive, and establish themselves as a church family, devoted to helping other Christian deportees.

Levon attended the Armenian Evangelical School and later the American University. His education was interrupted to help his ailing father at the store where the work appealed to his sense of business and his social nature. He devoted his life to Christ and Church as a member of the First Armenian Evangelical Church.

The Church was the basis of his spiritual and social life where he was a member of the Christian Endeavor Movement, taught Sunday School, sang in the choir, and with a group of Armenian Endeavor members was a founding member of KCHAG Christian Endeavor Summer Camp. He was a member of the Haigazian College Board of Managers in Lebanon and the Board of Trustees in the USA.

He met his future wife Shake, daughter of Adour and Ovsanna Adrouny, at KCHAG. They were married on February 13, 1954 and were blessed with three children, Aline, Dickran, and Alec. They moved to the United States in 1970, temporarily settling in San Francisco and eventually moving to Saratoga, CA. Levon, his brother Puzant, and nephews, Ike and Sam, established five Carpeteria stores in the San Francisco Bay Area and Levon continued working even after retirement.

Levon and his family were members of the Calvary Armenian Congregational Church in San Francisco. Both he and Shake devoted



their time and energy to the Church. His opinions on Church matters were sought and he loved reading about and discussing politics. His wife preceded him in death in 2004. Levon leaves behind his children, Aline Richards, Dr. Dickran (Therese) and Alec (Anahid) and five grandchildren, Kevin Richards, Max, Cole, Andrea and Peter Gulesserian.

The family requests that donations be made in memory of the Levon and Shake Gulesserian Endowment Fund to Calvary Armenian Congregational Church, San Francisco, CA. □

## Elmer Kaprielian

Elmer "Kap" Kaprielian passed away on May 27, 2017 in Walnut Creek, CA at the age of 95.



He was the son of Michael and Laura Kaprielian of Fresno and grandson of the Rev. Dr. Manesseh and Mary Papazian. He attended Fresno State College and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1942 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering. Kap played the clarinet in the Trojan marching band. He completed his graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Following graduation, he served in the U.S. Navy as a civilian electrical engineer.

Following his military service, Kap worked for Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) in Fresno as an estimator and retired 41 years later as the Senior Vice-President of Power Generation and a member of the company's management committee. His major contributions at PG&E involved the testing and start-up of new fossil fuel generating units and the operation of the company's generation and transmission systems. After retirement, he consulted in electrical power matters both in the U.S. and abroad. He authored a book which chronicled the events that led to the interconnection of electrical power systems in the western region of the U.S.

He was an active member for many years at Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill. In addition to his activities at the church, he served as Moderator of the East Bay Association, the Board of Directors of the Northern California/Nevada Conference, and Conference Moderator. At the national level, he served on the Board of Directors of the United Church of Christ World Board.

A proud member of the Knights of Vartan, Kap's life focused on his family, his church and

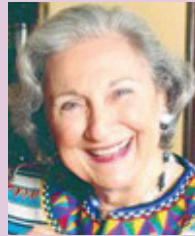
the university which helped to chart and shape him. He was an avid gardener and was known by his family as the "Muffin Man." He would play "happy birthday" on his clarinet over the phone to celebrate each family member's birthday.

Kap is survived by his wife of 68 years, Gloria, daughters Gail Quirk (David) and Claudia Falbo (Tony) and son, Douglas Kaprielian, six grandchildren, Dana Pieraldi (Justin), Laura Quirk, Alisa Falbo, Nicholas Falbo, Alison Kaprielian and James Kaprielian and two great-grandchildren, Reese and Rory Pieraldi.

A celebration of his life was held at Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill, CA. Contributions in Kap's memory may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Hillcrest Congregational Church Endowment, or the University of Southern California, Viterbi School of Engineering. □

## Elizabeth Munroe

Elizabeth "Liz" Munroe passed away peacefully on May 28, 2017 in San Antonio, TX, just 12 days after her beloved husband's Tom's passing, surrounded by her family. She was 91.



Born on March 18, 1926 to Kaloust Aijian and Siroon Philibosian in Atlanta, GA, Elizabeth was a multi-talented artist and author, and was very involved in the First Presbyterian Church.

She married the love of her life, Tom Munroe, Jr. in 1952 and were best friends, soulmates and rarely apart from one another. Tom passed away twelve days prior to Liz.

Her maternal Aunt, Ruth Philibosian, so loved the AMAA Mission that she bequeathed her entire estate to the AMAA, naming that fund for Elizabeth's beloved mother, Siroon. The Munroe family appreciated and supported the work of the AMAA throughout their lives.

Elizabeth was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved and devoted husband Tom, and her brother Karl Aijian. She is survived by her brother Richard Aijian (Vicki), her children Thomas Munroe III (Karen), Prissie Conner (Pat), and Laurie Prescott (Matt), grandchildren Joshua Rollins, Jaalla Weir (Jason), Perry Connor (Emily), Joie Conner, Mike Conner, Thomas "Will" Munroe IV, Rachel Holmes (Jacob), Rebekah Smith (Ryan), Amy Beth Powell (Nick), Molly Mills (David) and Abigail Prescott, seven great-grandchildren and many other extended family members.

The family requests that donations may be made in her memory to the AMAA. □

## George Steele

George Steele of Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey, passed away Tuesday, June 13, 2017 after a long illness. He was 87. George leaves his wife of 42 years, Rosa Steele; his son



Christopher John Steele and his girlfriend Bianna Granin; his daughter, Christina Marie Scerbo and her husband Ernest Scerbo; and two grandchildren Vanessa Rose Scerbo and Adrienne Marie Scerbo, along with many family and friends whom he loved and cherished.

Born and raised in Jerusalem, George came to the US in 1957 where he worked tirelessly as an entrepreneur until the onset of his illness. He had offices in the Empire State Building before he relocated his business to New Jersey where he established Bar-Maid Corporation.

A wake was held on Thursday, June 15 and the funeral service on Friday, June 16, both at the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ.

At George's request, donations in lieu of flowers are designated to the Armenian Missionary Association of America. May he rest in peace! □

**The AMAA Board of Directors and the staff wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the following deceased friends.**

- \* Marie Janian  
Munster, IL
- \* Gladys Parnagian  
Fresno, CA
- \* Zohrab Shamassian  
Lake Forest, CA

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." **Revelation 14:13 (NIV)**

\* Memorials designated for AMAA

# Official Call to the 98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Of the Armenian Missionary Association of America



The 98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the AMAA Headquarters, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. All members of the AMAA are invited to attend the Meeting to:

- I. Consider and approve the reports of the Officers, Committees, Chapters and Affiliated Boards of the Association for the fiscal year 2016-2017;
- II. Review the financial reports for the fiscal year 2016-2017;
- III. Announce the names of the newly elected Board members;
- IV. Elect members to the Nominating Committee;
- V. Elect an Auditor; and
- VI. Consider and address any other business that may come before the membership.

## PROGRAM OF THE 98<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

### Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at the AMAA Headquarters

- 6:00 pm .....Dinner
- 7:00 pm .....Armenian Evangelical World Council Meeting

### Friday, October 20<sup>th</sup> at the AMAA Headquarters

- 9:00 am .....Armenian Evangelical World Council Meeting
- 12:00 pm .....Lunch
- 6:00 pm .....Dinner
- 7:00 pm .....AMAA Board of Directors' Meeting

### Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at the AMAA Headquarters

- 9:00 am .....98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting
- 12:30 pm .....Lunch
- 1:30 pm .....AMAA Board of Directors' Meeting (Short Session)

### Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at the Marriott at Glenpointe, Teaneck, NJ

- 6:00 pm .....Reception
- 7:00 pm .....Banquet

### Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Armenian Presbyterian Church, Paramus, NJ

- 11:00 am .....98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Worship Service and Installation of AMAA Officers
- 12:00 pm .....Light Lunch





Armenian Missionary Association of America  
31 West Century Road  
Paramus, NJ 07652

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Kindergarten Students at a Refugee Camp in Beirut, Lebanon in early 1920s (From AMAA Archives)